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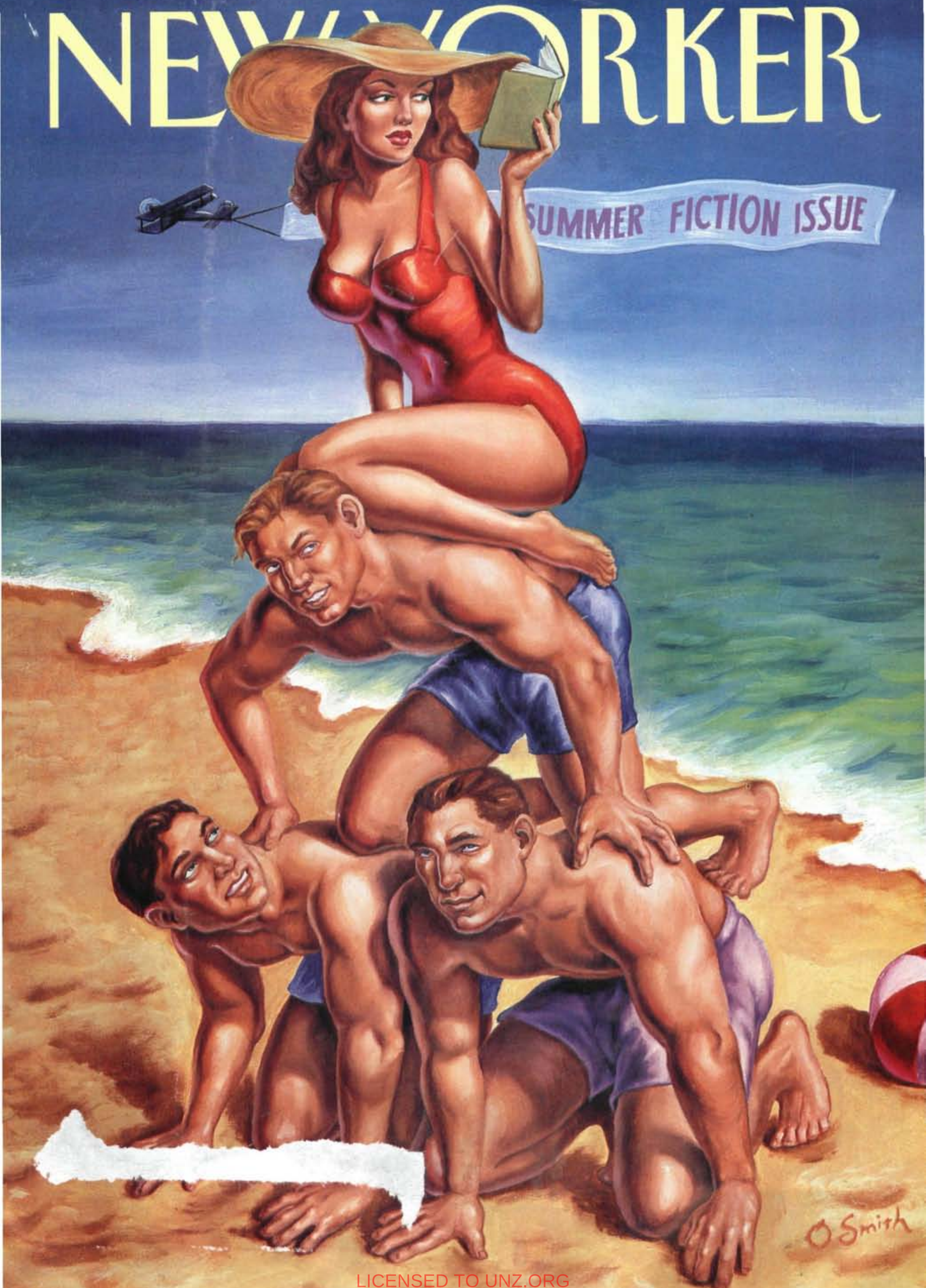
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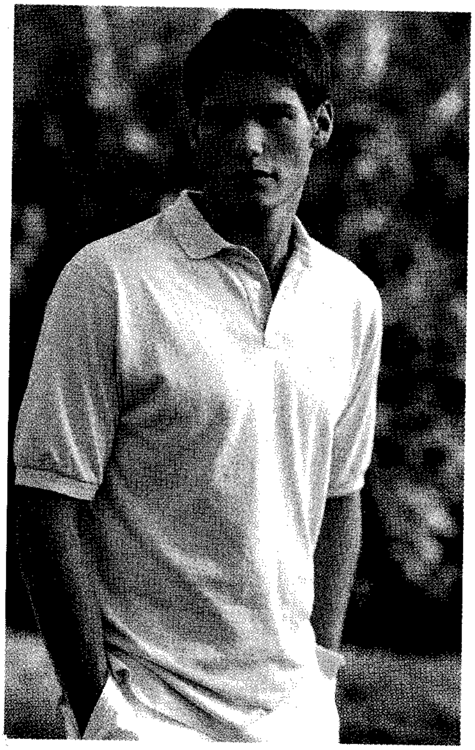

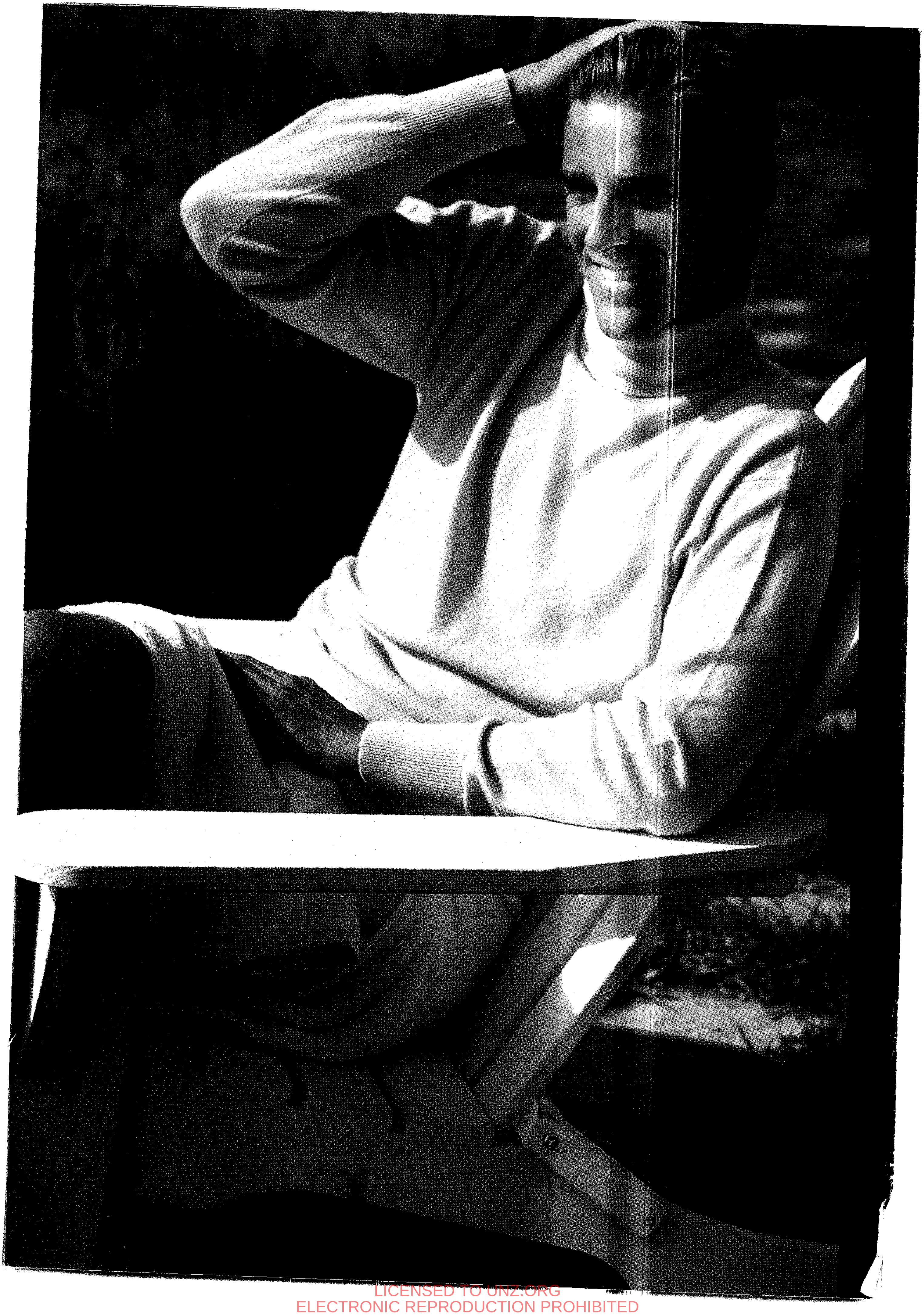

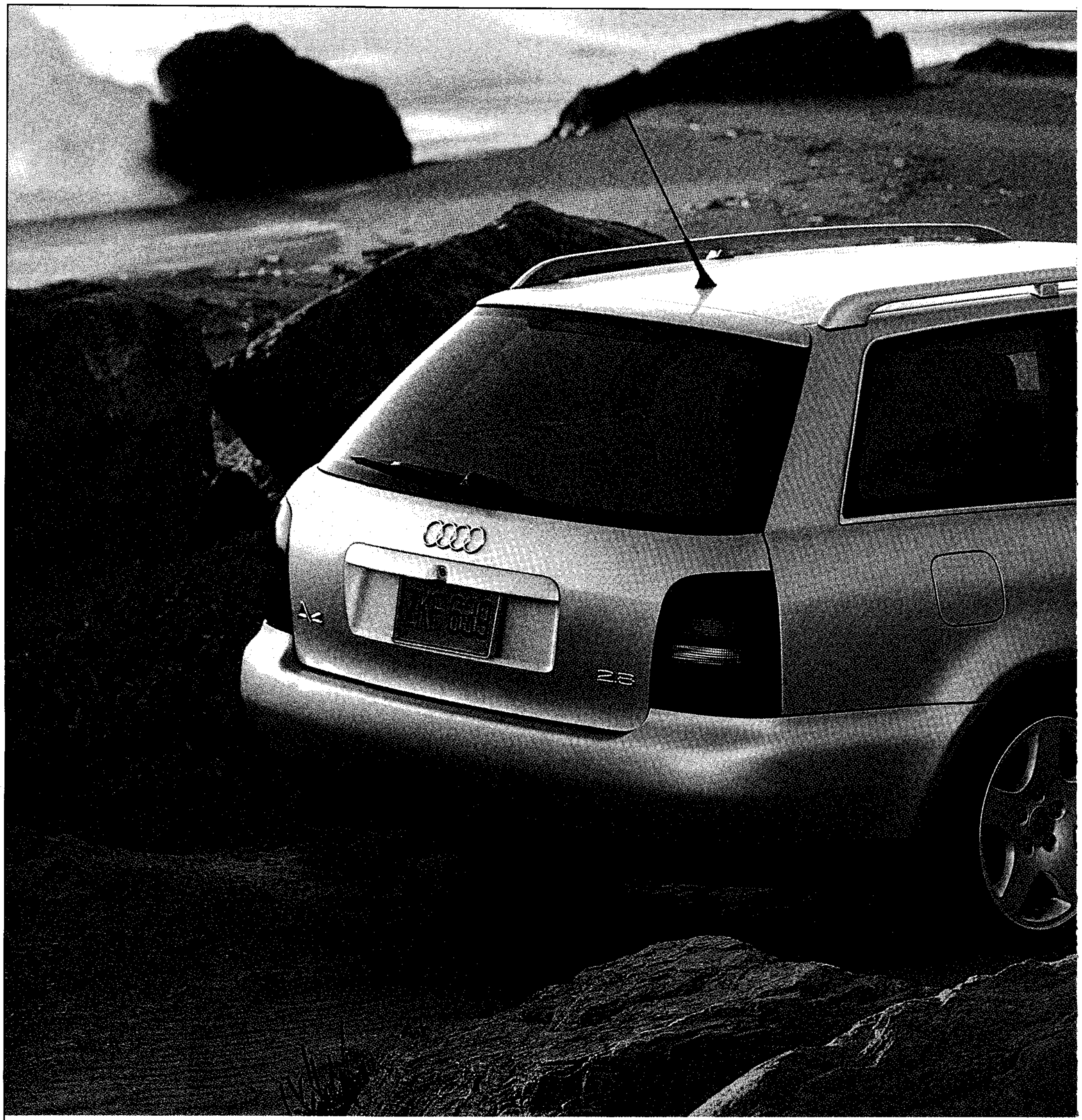

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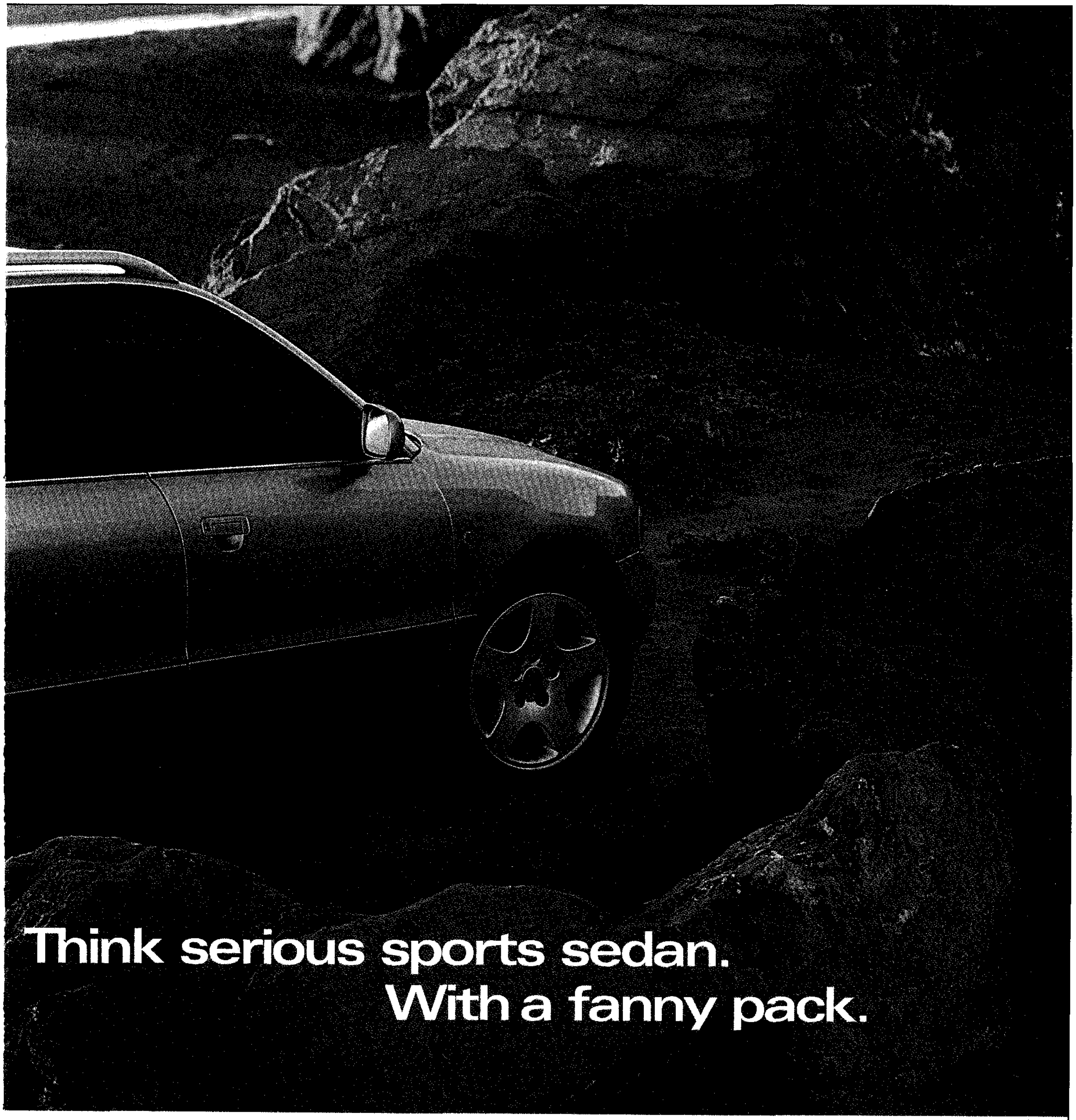

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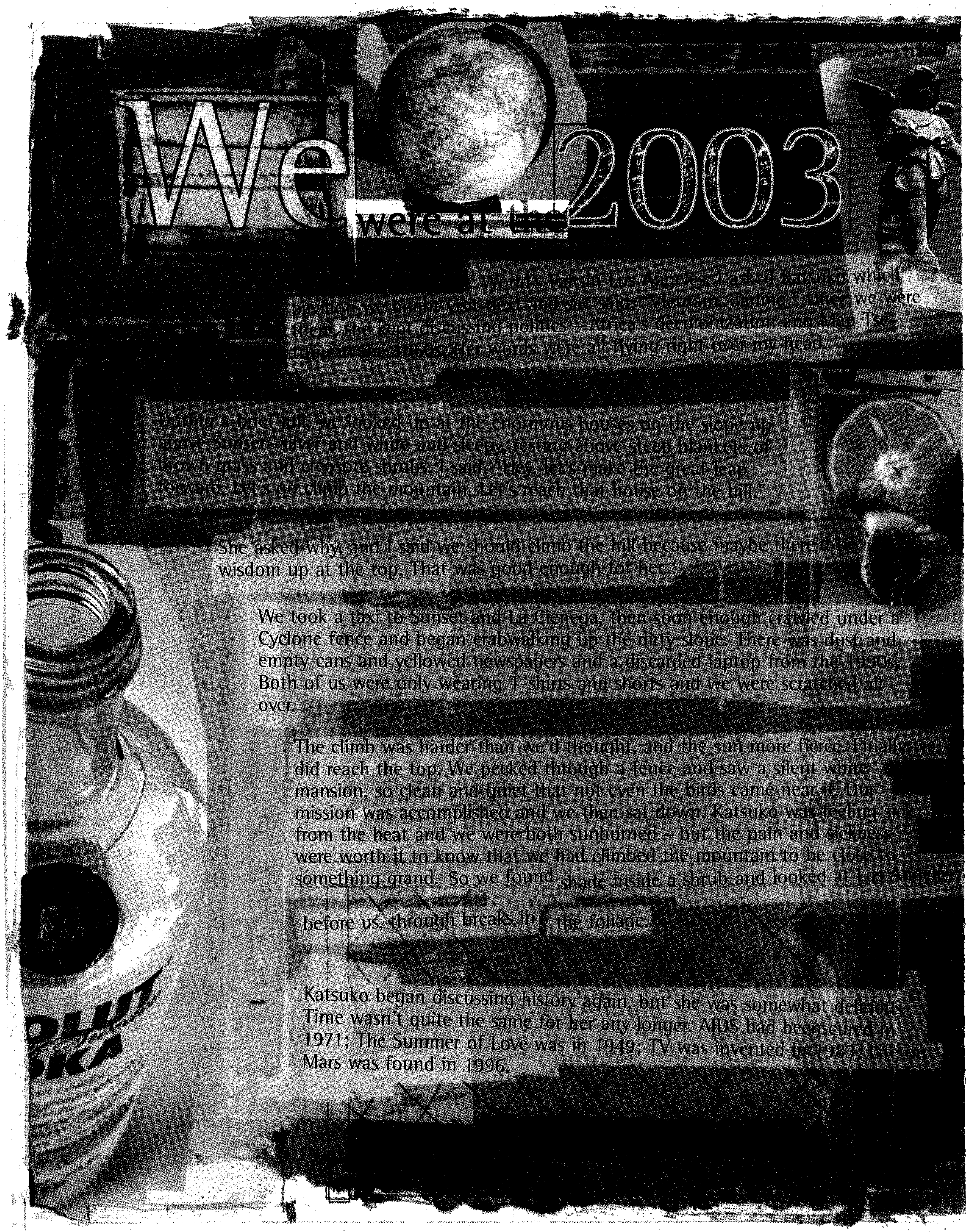

We were at the 2003

World's Fair in Los Angeles. I asked Katsuko which pavilion we might visit next and she said, "Vietnam, darling." Once we were there, she kept discussing politics – Africa's decolonization and Mao Tse-tung in the 1960s. Her words were all flying right over my head.

During a brief lull, we looked up at the enormous houses on the slope up above Sunset–silver and white and sleepy, resting above steep blankets of brown grass and creosote shrubs. I said, "Hey, let's make the great leap forward. Let's go climb the mountain. Let's reach that house on the hill."

She asked why, and I said we should climb the hill because maybe there'd be wisdom up at the top. That was good enough for her.

We took a taxi to Sunset and La Cienega, then soon enough crawled under a Cyclone fence and began crabwalking up the dirty slope. There was dust and empty cans and yellowed newspapers and a discarded laptop from the 1990s. Both of us were only wearing T-shirts and shorts and we were scratched all over.

The climb was harder than we'd thought, and the sun more fierce. Finally we did reach the top. We peeked through a fence and saw a silent white mansion, so clean and quiet that not even the birds came near it. Our mission was accomplished and we then sat down. Katsuko was feeling sick from the heat and we were both sunburned – but the pain and sickness were worth it to know that we had climbed the mountain to be close to something grand. So we found shade inside a shrub and looked at Los Angeles before us, through breaks in the foliage.

Katsuko began discussing history again, but she was somewhat delirious. Time wasn't quite the same for her any longer. AIDS had been cured in 1971; The Summer of Love was in 1949; TV was invented in 1983; Life on Mars was found in 1996.

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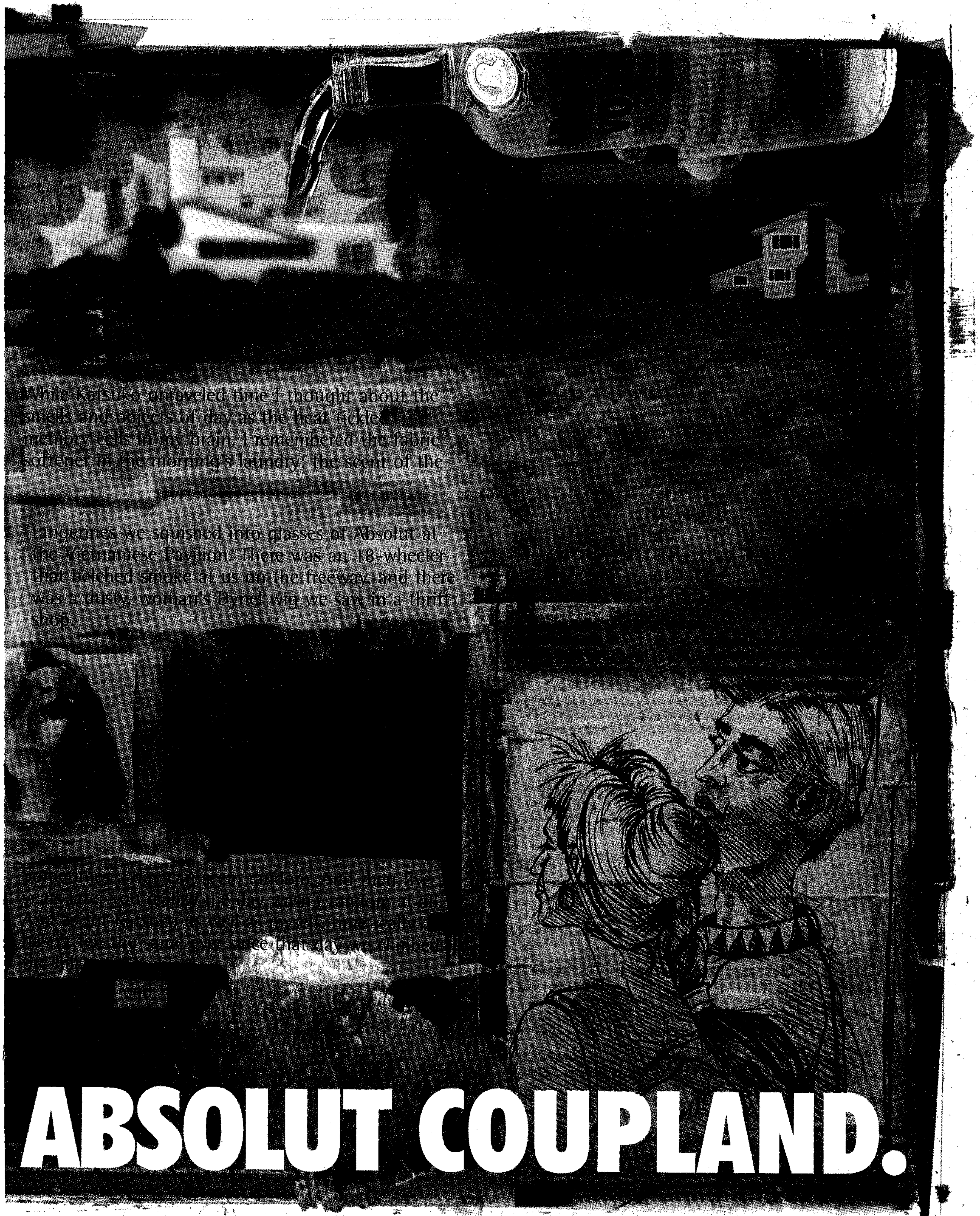
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While Katsuko unraveled time I thought about the smells and objects of day as the heat tickled the memory cells in my brain. I remembered the fabric softener in the morning's laundry; the scent of the tangerines we squished into glasses of Absolut at the Vietnamese Pavilion. There was an 18-wheeler that belched smoke at us on the freeway, and there was a dusty, woman's Dynel wig we saw in a thrift shop.

Sometimes a day can seem random. And then five years later you realize the day wasn't random at all. And as for Katsuko as well as myself, time really hasn't felt the same ever since that day we climbed the hill.

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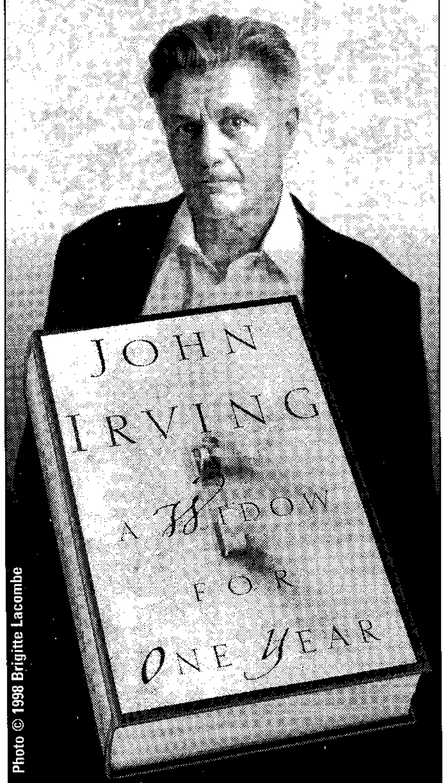
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THE NEW YORKER
SUMMER FICTION ISSUE

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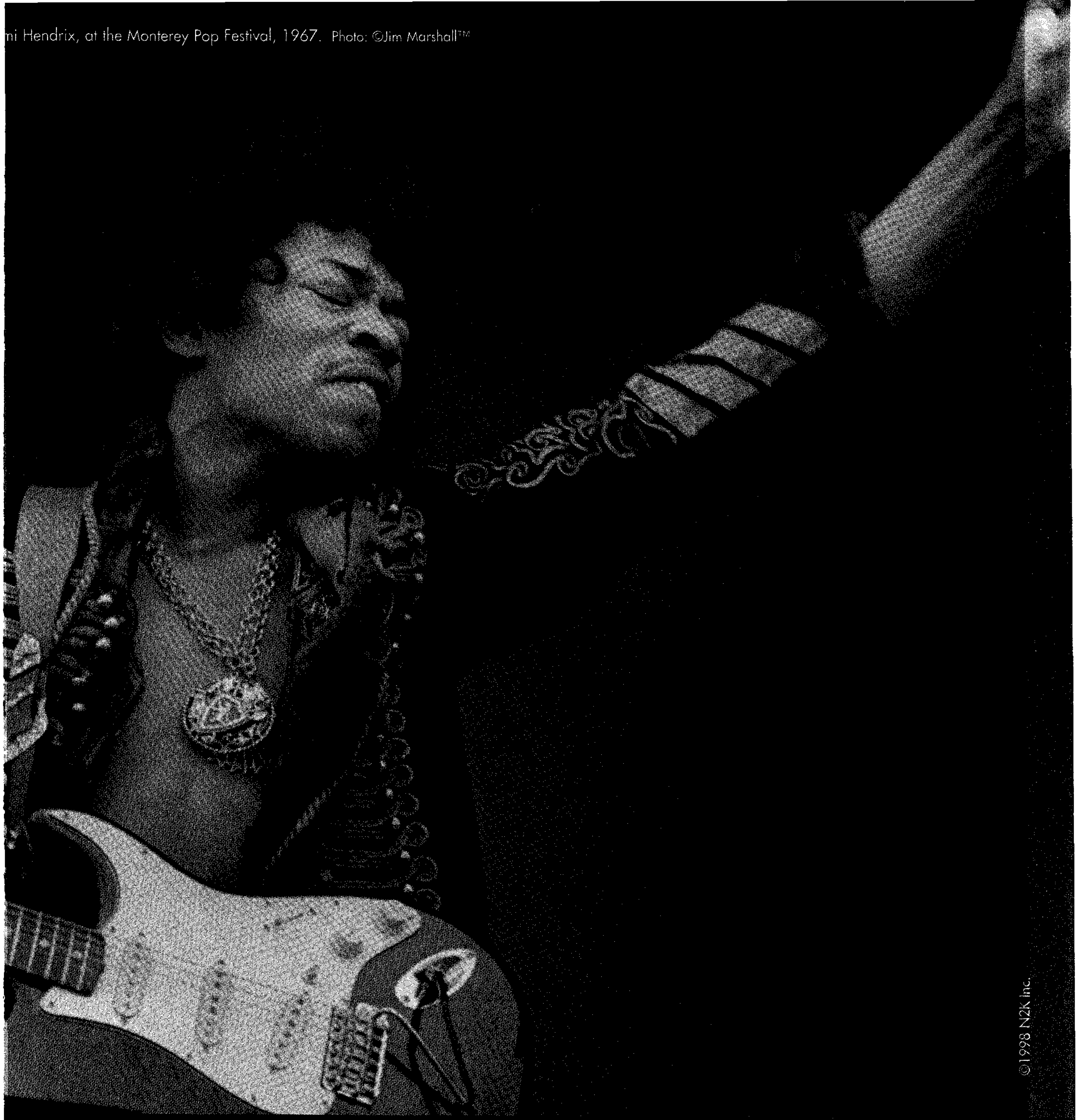

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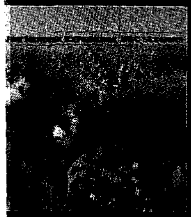

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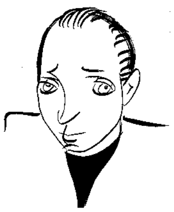

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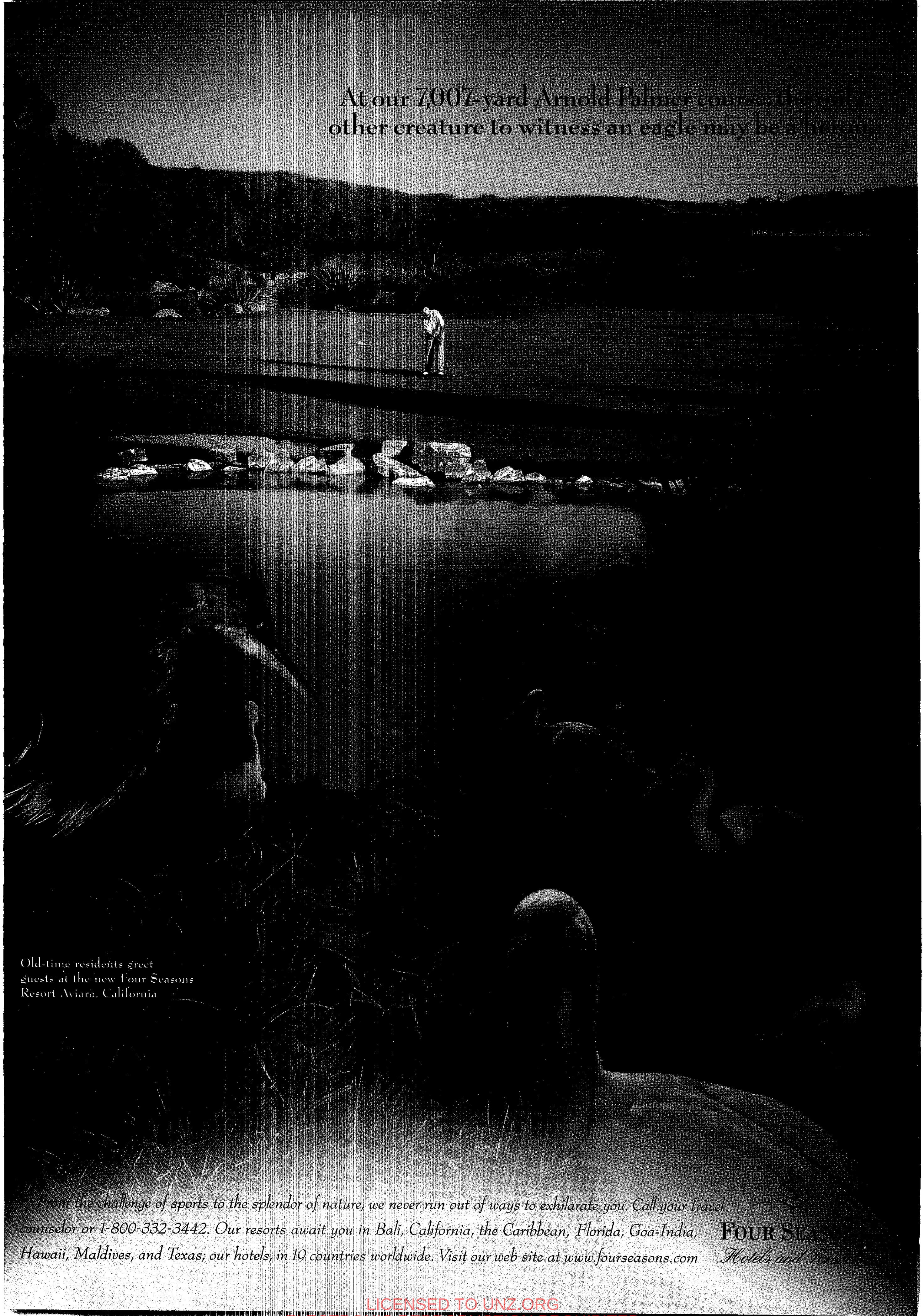
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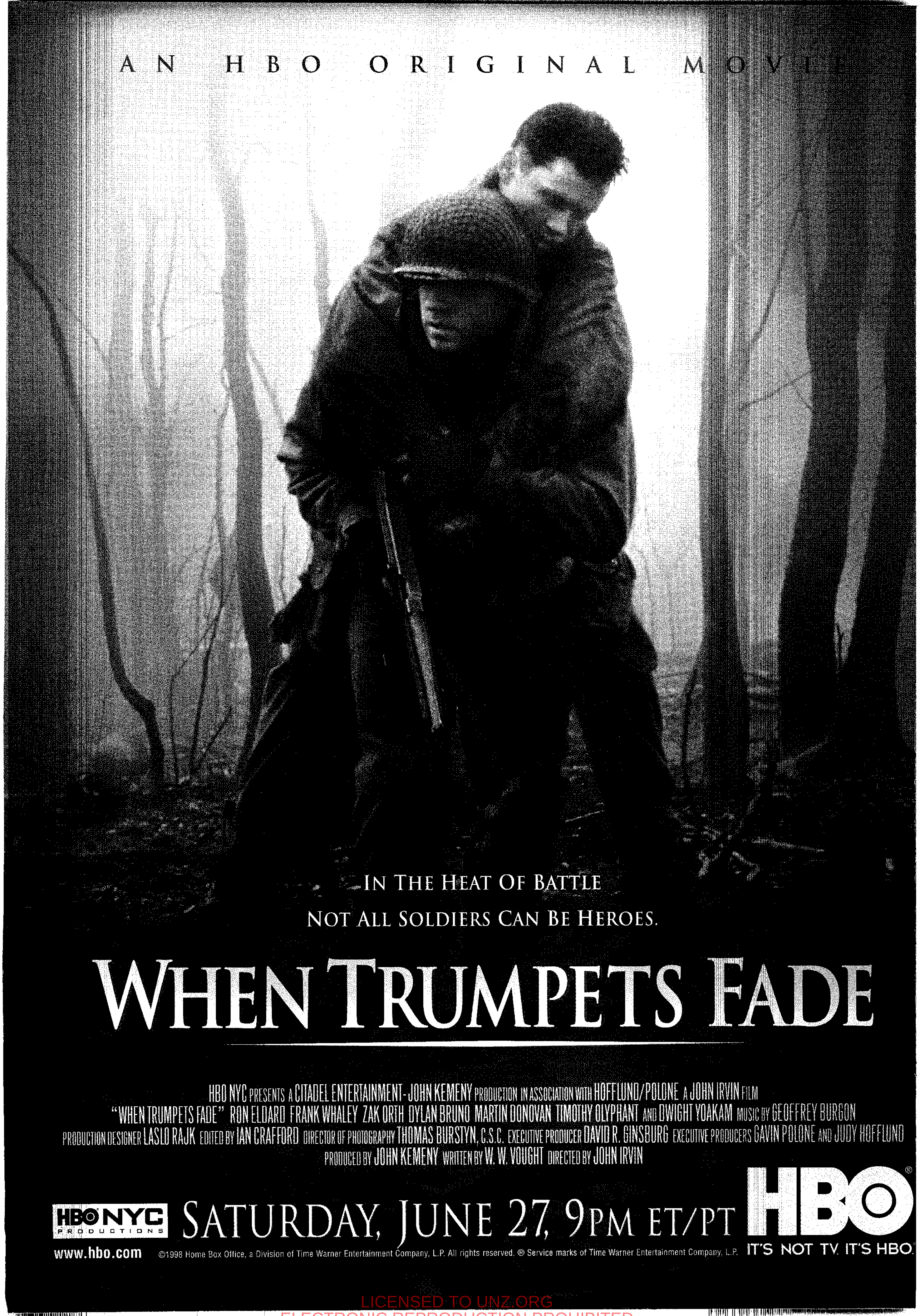

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COMMENT

THE MYTH OF SUMMER

Was it invented in America?

MAGAZINE editors love the idea of "summer reading" because it implies that somebody out there is having a summer. It's consoling to imagine Americans contemplating a long stretch of time and beach, possessed of no ambition keener than to turn over a few hundred pages of lit'rature. In fact, you may well be reading this issue, folded over, damp, in a subway car or commuter train, in conditions we know too well: the sweat—shaped by the interesting tension between the blast-furnace heat outside the car and the air-conditioning inside it—forming a second skin between underwear and shirt. The American idea of summer—the idea of this issue—is even more unreal than many of our other national devotions. It comes to us now as some compound of bad fifties movies (of the love-by-the-lake kind) and bad sixties movies (of the beach-blanket kind). After that, movies stopped taking summer as a subject and became the subject of summer, so that we recall our vacations in terms of which monster munched whom when: was that the summer when the shark ate all the bathers or the one when the lizard crunched the Chrysler Building?

The truth is that summer is white-and-brown skies, a muggy climate, an overworked population. The summer that sticks with one is sticky: the summer of 1966 in Philadelphia still clings moistly to at least one Philly writer's soul. And the drier truth is that, compared with Europeans, we Americans have impossibly short vacations, and have to struggle hard for any time at all to sit and read and think. In Europe, people get six-week vacations, and whole families move from North to South like Visigoths on the march. Paris in August is empty—truly empty, not a restaurant open or a cop in sight. Throughout the continent in late July, the traffic on the highways is impassable. (The familiar seven-year itch set-up is possible only in New York, where Dad, or Mom, still stays behind; everywhere else, the family goes away together, which leads to the Pauline-on-the-Beach scenario, a different thing.)

Yet we're the ones with the obsession. The typically American twist, which produces summer fantasies and

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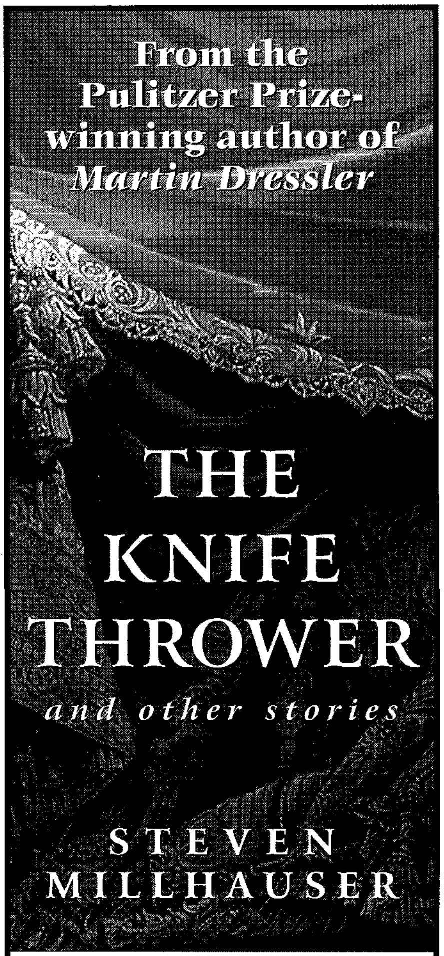

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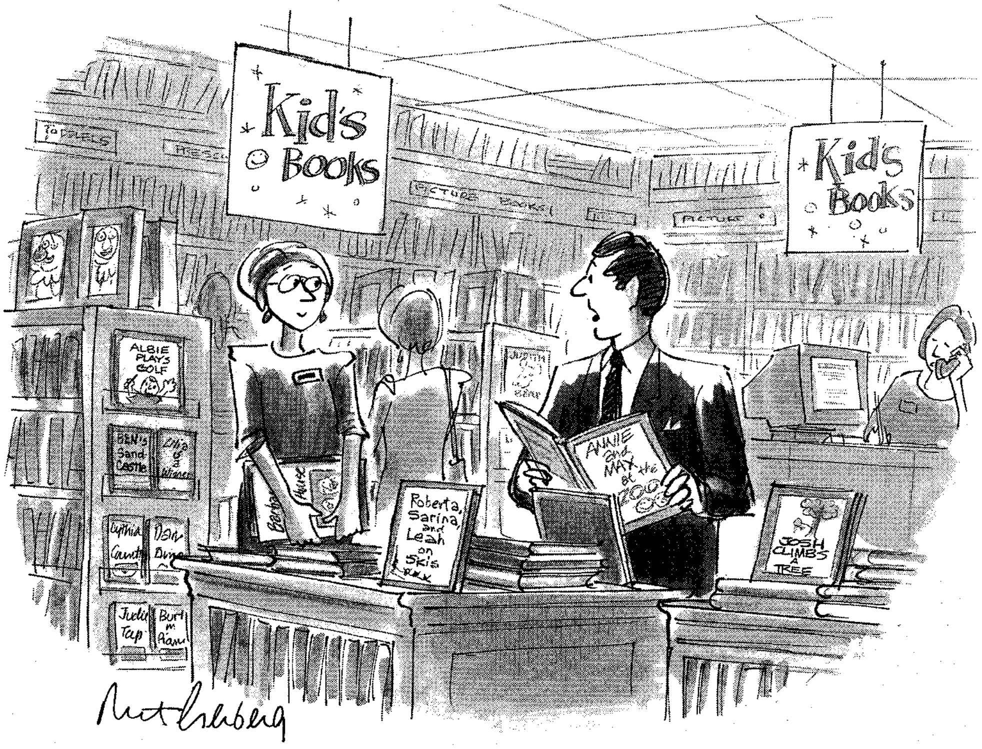

"What would you recommend to hold a seven-year-old girl's attention in a car from East Seventy-eighth Street to Bridgehampton?"

• •

summer literature, is that the privileged way is the normal way, or ought to be—and therefore we turn our rage against the things that keep us normal, rather than against the forces of privilege that keep us out. In reality, only highly privileged Americans have the kind of summer that all other Americans like to imagine is theirs by right. Was there ever a more poignant picture than that of the Clintons summering on Martha's Vineyard, with pleading, happy, insecure faces that we recognize as our own: *It's nice here. Could we stay?* And since a good summer is ours by right, we insist we've had one even if we haven't, and make up in symbolism what we lack in spare time. Summer in America is another place, to be dreamed of rather than remembered. You find it where you can, and mostly you find it by thinking you'll have it, eventually. If the American Christmas, which is the only other cult that can compare with the American summer, is our way of linking our materialism to a spiritual ideal, then maybe the American summer is our way of yoking our spiritual ideal to a material thing—a particular place, for rent. Santa Claus comes down the chimney, and the Lifeguard comes across the dunes. Same guy, in a different red suit, promising the good life.

If we do get less summer than most other countries, we believe in it more. When we write about summer in America, often we're writing about the distance between the way we like to imagine it and the way it really is. Into the image of the ideal American summer, with its bikinis and its tan lines, pokes a little of the real American summer, gasping for a popsicle. In this issue, for instance, Arthur Miller writes about summer before air-conditioning (and implicitly reminds us of the truth that it has become possible to enjoy, rather than just endure, the American summer only since we managed to negate it with a machine) and summons up Central Park as it was at night seventy years ago, crowded with hundreds of families who had gone there to escape the heat, all sleeping next to big alarm clocks, which set up a ringing of bells in the early-morning hours as people got ready to head home, have a shower, put on a shirt and tie, and go to work: summer defined not by leisure but by labor, the next day's work. Ethan Canin writes about country ponds, fly-fishing, sailboats, and young lovers lying on a blanket on the bank of a river at a time when he was working indoors, from before dawn to late at night, training to be a surgeon. Again, summer defined not by leisure but by labor. Roger Angell's piece calls up a troop train on a summer night, a young soldier obeying orders, with no idea of where he is headed, or even where he happens to be: summer as something best, or most memorably, seen from a passing train on the way to a war. Mark Singer debunks the "Easy Rider" summer of good will and free love—the hippie summer of anything goes, which turns out to have been a summer of disputes over back-end points. Of all the stories about summer collected here, only one gives us, naturally and unironically, an American summer of the kind that we like to think about. Eugene Walter describes a summer of ice men and watermelon and porches.

Eugene Walter died this spring, and the summer he describes occurred more than half a century ago. An American summer is what most of us never get—or, if we did, it was when we were young, and didn't have children (or selves) to look after or bills to pay.

Summer is about longing for summer. Perhaps that's why the words we drop casually in talking about summer are, all by themselves, so disarming that just reeling them off is, to a faraway American, enough to summon a tear: suntan lotion, Coca-Cola, summer porch, chlorine-scented, chopped ice, Cuba libre, low moon, silent station, empty platform, lamps, trees, breezes, billboards, beaches. The best summer stories are the ones in which reading something makes you wish that you were doing something other than reading something. Henry James once declared that the most beautiful words in English were "summer afternoon." He was living in England when he said it. But he was thinking like a homeboy.

—ADAM GOPNIK

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DECONSTRUCTING BIBI

In "The Outsider" (May 25th) David Remnick discusses several factors that have significantly influenced Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister of Israel, including his father's political philosophy, his brother's heroic death, his own outsider status, and his personal life. Remnick also mentions in passing that Netanyahu was "regarded as intelligent and diligent but not especially creative" in his Army unit. That comment rang true to me. As Netanyahu's faculty adviser in the Department of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I observed that he was secretive, amazingly persuasive, extraordinarily hardworking, and superbly able to organize his time (he completed eight years' worth of study in four) but that his architectural designs, while reasonable and practicable, were not especially creative. I believe that that is why he left architecture for management. Creativity in any field, from architecture to politics, requires the ability to synthesize many seemingly disparate or contradictory factors and come up with a solution that resolves them all. Netanyahu apparently lacks sufficient creativity to devise a plan that will both allow him to come to a peace agreement with the Palestinians and enable him to retain his majority support in the Knesset.

LEON B. GROISSER
Professor Emeritus, M.I.T.
Lexington, Mass.

That Benjamin Netanyahu concurs with his father on matters of Jewish survival, that he smokes cigars at taxpayers' expense, that his wife exhibits habits displeasing to the left are all insignificant issues. As always in Israel, what's significant is the survival of the Jewish people and the preservation of their sovereign nation, and Netanyahu, by putting these interests first, seems to be on the right track.

STEPHEN SHEMIN
Scottsdale, Az.

LEARNING FROM FAILURE

As an American now spending a year in France, I found James Atlas's thoughts in "The Art of Failing" (May 25th) particularly apt. The American entrepreneurial spirit makes great achievements and the acquisition of fame and wealth possible, and gives people not only a first but also a second, and even a third, chance; failure is frequently followed by success. There is, however, a less appealing side to American capitalism: the rewards of success have become so grand and so visible that we judge our own and others' lives only by the level of economic and professional success attained. In France, by contrast, tradition is more important than efficiency, and, perhaps as a consequence, economic possibilities are much more limited. People don't seem to expect as much from themselves or the world; success is less grand and failure less devastating. Those American visitors to France who judge in terms of economic success and failure miss out on the simple pleasures of life that French people enjoy here every day.

MARCUS BYRUCK
Aix-en-Provence, France

"The Art of Failing" brought to mind an old Jewish story about a man named Zusya who, moments before his death, had a revelation. "In the world to come," he said, "I shall not be asked 'Why were you not more like Moses?' I shall be asked 'Why were you not more like Zusya?' " What's at stake in the art of failing is not merely self-acceptance but also the acceptance of something much larger than ourselves.

WALTER B. LEVIS
New York City

EDITORS' NOTE: In Alex Ross's "The Salzburg Fix" (May 25th) we gave an incorrect date for the beginning of the Salzburg Festival. The Festival will begin on July 23rd and run through August 30th.

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-840-8489 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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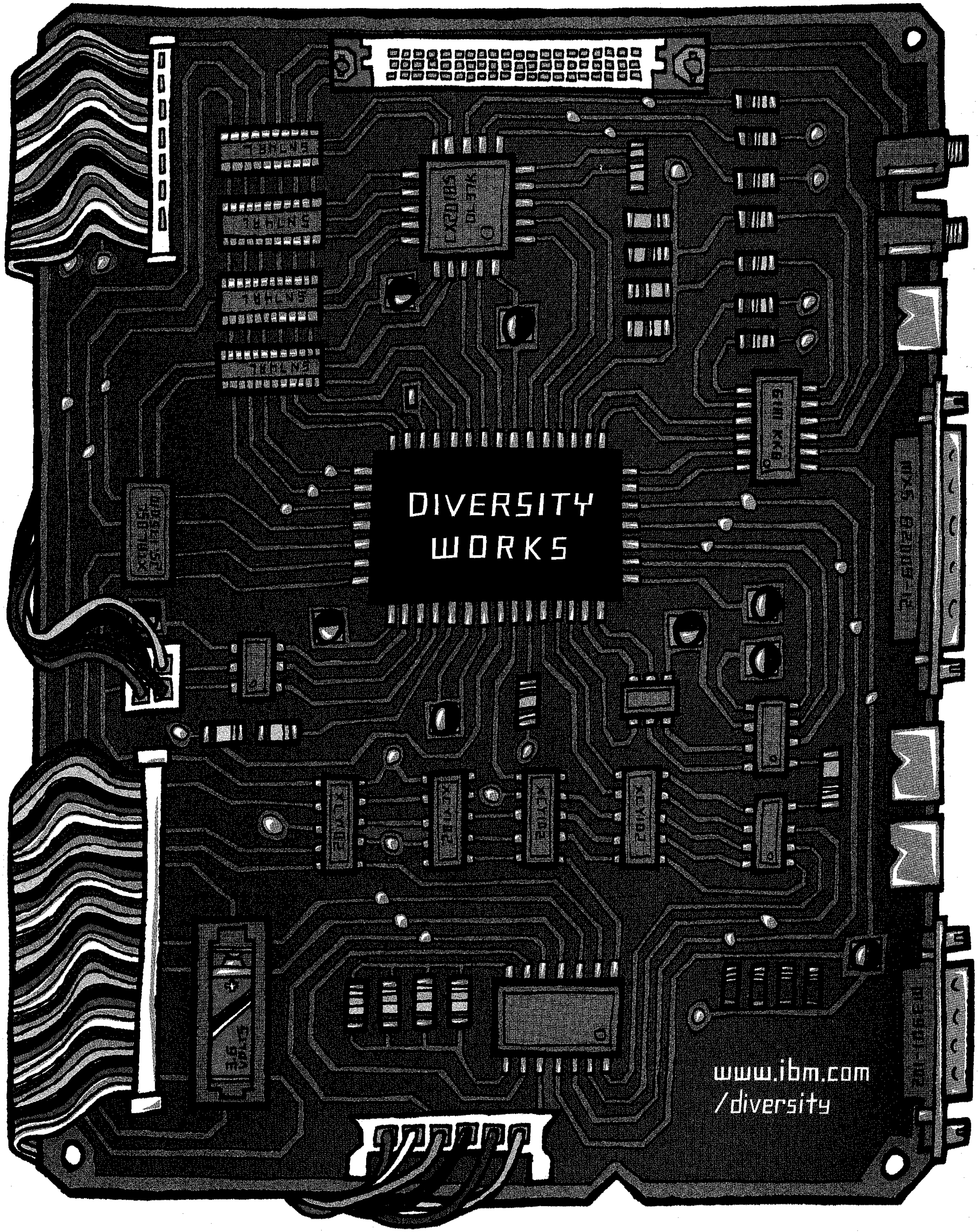
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

An Evening with Quentin Crisp—The writer and raconteur opens the Glines summer season with his 1978 show. Performances begin June 17 at 8 and continue through July 5. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 330-7200.)

Karen Finley—The performance artist, in "The Return of the Chocolate Smeared Woman," her latest work. Opens June 17 at 8 and continues through July 4. (Flea Theatre, 51 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051.)

Love's Fire—The Acting Company performs one-acts by Eric Bogosian, William Finn, John Guare, Tony Kushner, Marsha Norman, Ntozake Shange, and Wendy Wasserstein—each inspired by one of Shakespeare's sonnets; with music by Finn, Chico Freeman, and Adam Guettel. Previews June 19-21. Opens June 22 at 6:30 and continues through July 5. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Love's Fowl—A puppet opera about Chicken Little (La Pulcina Piccola), by Susan J. Vitucci (libretto) and Henry Krieger (music), who also perform the work. In Italian, with English supertitles. Opens June 17 at 8. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

A New Brain—Malcolm Gets is a songwriter awaiting surgery, in a new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and James Lapine. Graciela Daniele is the director. Preview on June 17. Opens June 18 at 7. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Nunsense A-Men—An all-male version of Dan Goggin's 1985 musical comedy, "Nunsense." In previews through June 22. Opens June 23 at 8. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Sakina's Restaurant—Aasif Mandvi portrays six characters in his one-man exploration of the South Asian community in New York. In previews through June 23. Opens June 24 at 8 and runs through July 12. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

The Skin of Our Teeth—Frances Conroy, John Goodman, and Kristen Johnston star in Thornton Wilder's play, the New York Shakespeare Festival's first outdoor production of the season. In previews through June 27. Opens June 28 at 8 and runs through July 12. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)

Smoke on the Mountain—The 1990 musical comedy returns to the Lamb's Theatre. Two previews on June 17. Opens June 18 at 7. (130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Twelfth Night—Philip Bosco, Helen Hunt, Brian Murray, Paul Rudd, Kyra Sedgwick, and Max Wright are in the cast of a Lincoln Center Theatre staging of Shakespeare's comedy. Directed by Nicholas Hytner. Previews begin June 19. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Winter's Tale—The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival begins its summer season. Previews June 24-26. Opens June 27 at 8 and runs through July 19. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 914-265-9575.)

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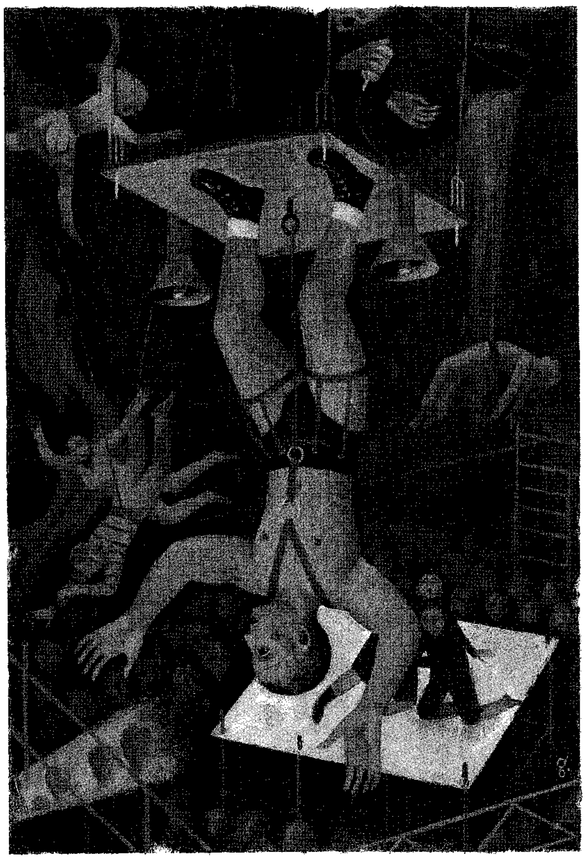
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

You Never Can Tell—The Roundabout Theatre Company offers one of Shaw's early "pleasant" plays, set at a British seaside resort. Directed by Nicholas Martin. In previews through June 20. Opens June 21 at 8. (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Art—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



"Villa Villa," high-flying performance art from the Argentinean troupe De La Guarda.

As Thousands Cheer—This Drama Dept. production of Moss Hart and Irving Berlin's 1933 satirical revue stars Kevin Chamberlin, Judy Kuhn, Howard McGillin, Paula Newsome, Mary Beth Peil, and B. D. Wong. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 541-8441.)

Avow—A pregnant woman falls for a priest, in a new comedy/drama by Bill C. Davis. (The Directors Company, 311 W. 43rd St. 501-3992.)

The Beauty Queen of Leenane—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother and her virgin forty-year-old daughter, who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. (3/16/98) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Cabaret—A mesmerizing production of the Kander and Ebb musical. Here, the dancers at the Kit Kat Klub, the symbol of anything-goes Weimar Germany, look shell-shocked and stigmatized. As the Emcee, Alan Cumming is astonishing—with his bruised-looking body, his huge, knowing eyes, and his satanic energy, he's a spectacle of mixed messages. Natasha Richardson, as Sally Bowles, casts a spectral glow. Directed by Sam Mendes. (4/6/98) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)

Charlatan—Tony Tanner portrays Sergey Diaghilev, in his one-man portrait of the Russian ballet impresario. (Jan Hus Playhouse, 351 E. 74th St. 362-3544. Closes July 5.)

Chicas 2000—An encore staging of Carmelita Tropicana's comedy about love in the age of genetic remodelling, in which she finds herself in the slammer for murdering a man who cloned cells from her derrière. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes June 27.)

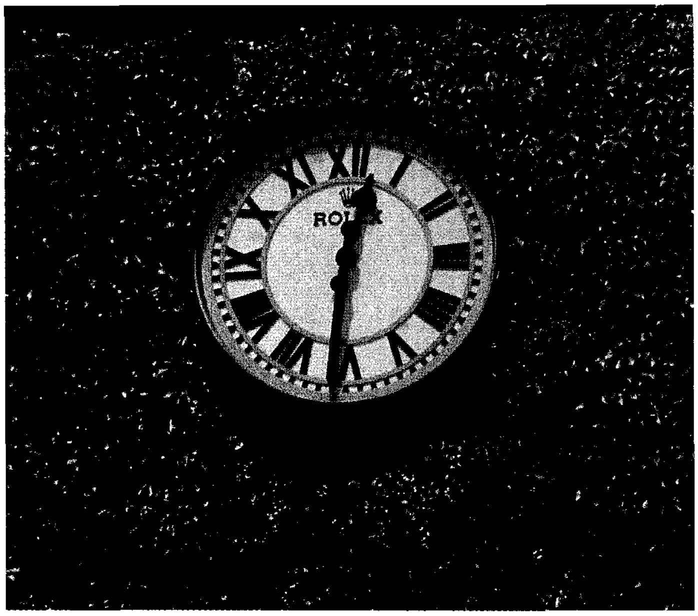
Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late singer Dinah Washington (Yvette Freeman). (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

Dress to Kill—The British comic Eddie Izzard returns to town with a new show. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Closes July 11.)

Fishes—A child named Junebug dreams of becoming a cold-blooded aquatic animal, in a play by Diana Son. (46 Walker Street Theatre, 46 Walker St. 560-7387. Closes June 27.)

The Fishkin Touch—The Jewish Repertory Theatre wraps up its season with a musical comedy, set in 1910 on the Lower East Side. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Closes June 29.)

Freak—In his "pseudo-autobiographical" one-man show about growing up in New York, John Leguizamo takes the audience on a very funny, breakneck jaunt down distorted-memory lane. He's a small guy, but his seemingly boneless body and boundless humor fill the large stage, and he absolutely charms, from start to finish. Directed by David Bar Katz. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Closes July 4.)



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Hedwig and the Angry Inch—Hedwig, as written and portrayed by John Cameron Mitchell, is a sweet transsexual singer from East Berlin, whose cabaret performance cum stadium act becomes a smart, funny, and very moving exploration of the redemptive, if perhaps fleeting, power of love. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

High Society—This musical, based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story" and the subsequent movie "High Society," has all the kick of flat champagne. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Irish . . . and How They Got That Way—This revue by Frank McCourt, author of the best-selling memoir "Angela's Ashes," is a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries, performed by a versatile and charming cast of six singers and musicians. Deftly directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop—Danny Hoch's new one-man show is a series of short monologues by characters concerned with at least one of the above. Mr. Hoch's versatility is astonishing, and at its best the show is perceptive and very funny. But it should have been honed to a finer edge. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes June 27.)

The Jello Is Always Red—The songwriter Clark Gesner ("You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown") stars in a revue of his own music. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes June 28.)

The Judas Kiss—Liam Neeson portrays Oscar Wilde in David Hare's new drama. Directed by Richard Eyre. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Lillian—In his new solo show, David Cale portrays a middle-aged woman who leaves her husband for a younger man. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes June 28.)

Labor Day—A. R. Gurney has revived a character from "The Cocktail Hour" for this semiautobiographical comedy, about a playwright who tries to revise his latest work during a family holiday. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Menopausal Gentleman—The performance artist Peggy Shaw files a hot flash from the butch-lesbian front, in her latest one-woman show. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 219-3088. Closes June 28.)

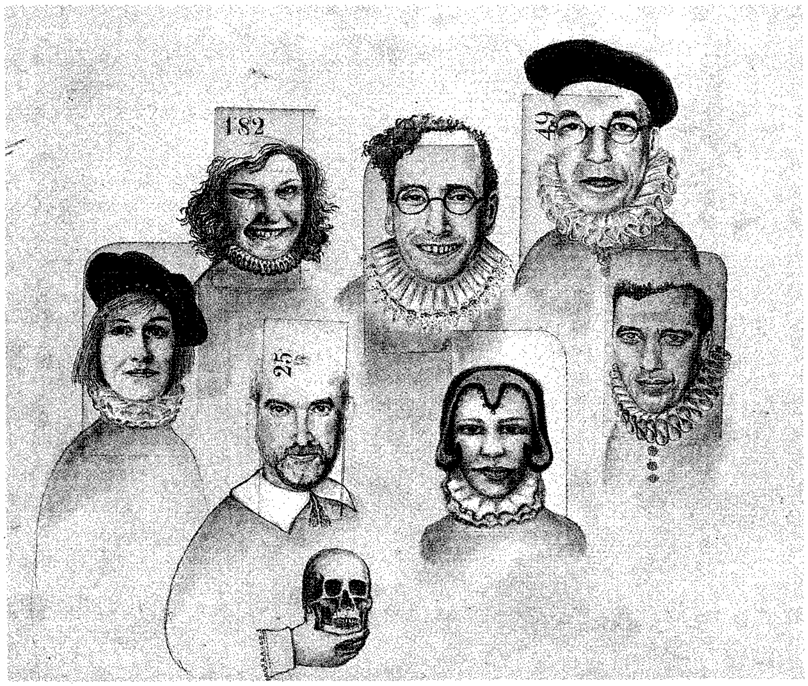
Miss Coco Peru's Liquid Universe—A heartfelt series of how-I-got-this-way vignettes written and performed by Miss Coco Peru, otherwise known as Clinton Leupp. The show is occasionally syrupy, and Miss Coco should have given herself more opportunities to show off her terrific singing voice, but her self-aware and self-lacerating humor and her engaging way with a story make this a winning evening. The well-paced direction is by Charles Randolph Wright. Sundays at 8, through June 28. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

Mr. Peters' Connections—Peter Falk returns to the stage to portray a retired pilot in Arthur Miller's new play. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes June 21.)

Pera Palas—The Turkish playwright Sinan Unel's drama, set in the Istanbul hotel of the same name, examines the clash of Eastern and Western cultures in his native country. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 246-8355. Closes June 28.)

Power Plays—Three short plays, two written by Elaine May and one by Alan Arkin, who perform them with Jeannie Berlin and Anthony Arkin, their respective offspring. May's writing and acting are, almost literally, insanely funny, and she and Arkin are a great match. (They're both long-ago Second City alums.) Like mother, like daughter: Mike Nichols and May once did a parody of "Brief Encounter," in which he was a dentist and she a patient, and in one of the plays here, Berlin is a dental patient whose neuroses know no bounds. All three of the plays are too long, but the comic brilliance of May and Arkin père (who also directed) is worth, at a rough estimate, ten million times the price of admission. Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Quidam—The Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil's latest production unfolds like a richly textured, loopy dream, the kind one might slip into after a Fellini-film marathon. All is magical and good in this universe, and enormous fun. (The big top at Battery Park City. For more information, call 800-678-5440. Closes July 5.)



"Love's Fire": Shakespeare-inspired plays by Marsha Norman, Wendy Wasserstein, Tony Kushner, John Guare, Eric Bogosian, Ntozake Shange, and William Finn.

The Race of the Ark Tattoo—The Foundry Theatre and P.S. 122 present a theatre piece by W. David Hancock, set in a flea market, in which each night's story is evoked by relics randomly selected from the rummage. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Ragtime—E. L. Doctorow's epic novel is transformed into a historical pageant. It's a big, brave, passionate gamble, masterfully directed by Frank Galati. (2/2/98) (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

R & J—A promising, if not exactly new, idea—schoolboys escape regimentation and discover their own passion by performing "Romeo and Juliet"—yields a few gripping moments surrounded by a lot of overheated panting, shouting, and foot-stomping. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220.)

Reno Finds Her Mind—The performance artist's latest solo show. (Sullivan Street Lounge, 189 Sullivan St. 420-1999. Closes July 5.)

Secrets Every Smart Traveler Should Know—In this revue inspired by a Fodor's travel guide, the best songs are the ones that manage to be goofy and savvy at the same time. The show hits turbulence, though, when the humor trades on international stereotypes. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Side Man—The Roundabout Theatre presents Warren Leigh's play about a mid-century big-band musician, which was presented earlier this year at Classic Stage Company. Directed by Michael Mayer. (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

The Sound of Music—Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful, but the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. (4/6/98) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Stupid Kids—A dark comedy of suburban-teen angst, by the late playwright John C. Russell. Michael Mayer is the director. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes June 27.)

Symphonie Fantastique—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. This isn't rubber-duckie performance art—just as dance can make space a palpable presence onstage, the show's creator, Basil Twist, uses feathers, streamers, mirrors, bubbles, and sophisticated lighting to do the same for water. And, as in dance, the movement illuminates the music. A peerless, delightful summer evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

A View from the Bridge—The Roundabout Theatre's excellent revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece. (1/5/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

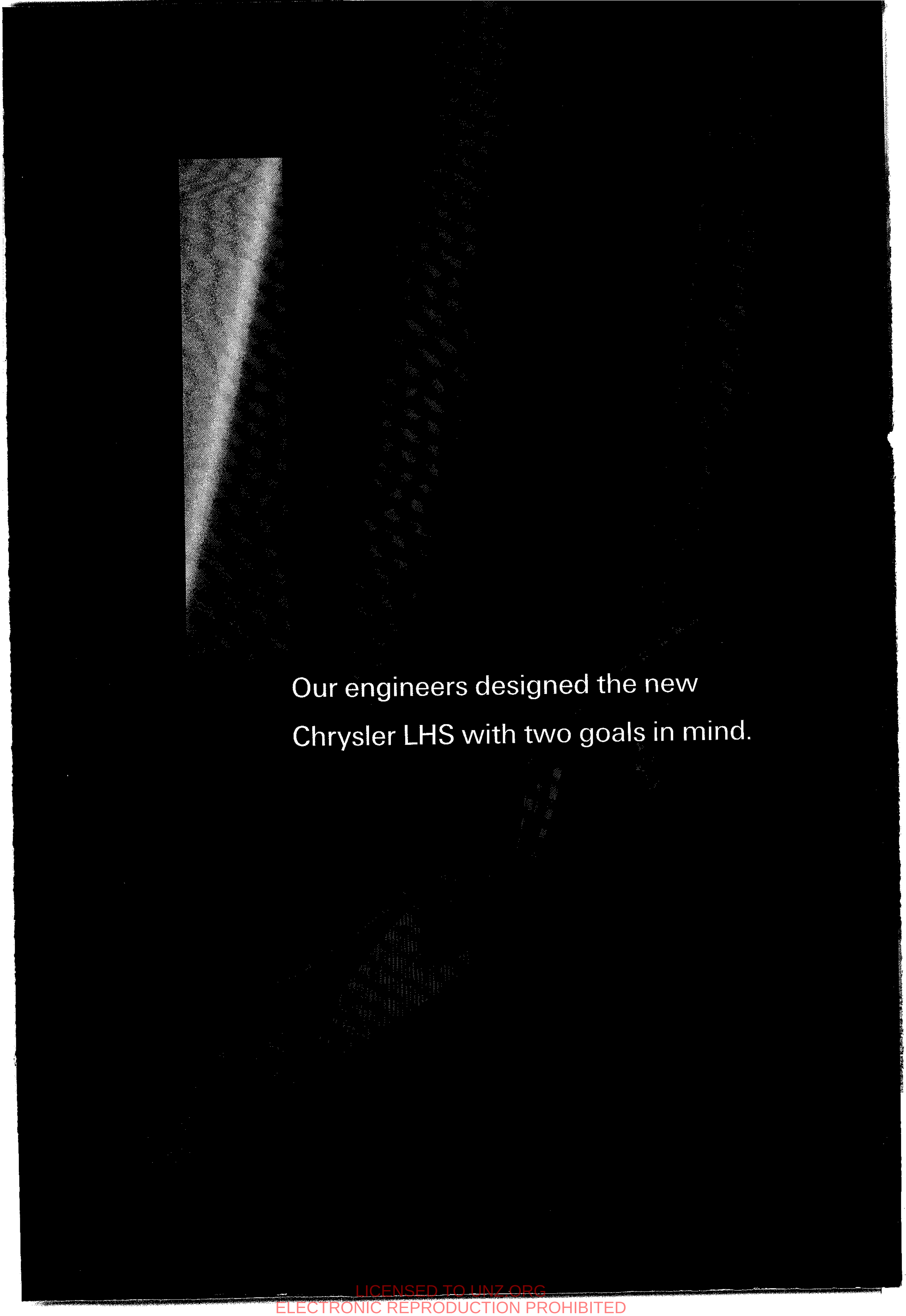
Villa Villa—The Argentinean troupe De La Guarda brings its airborne, bungee-jumping, acrobatic performance hybrid to town. (Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.)

Visiting Mr. Green—Eli Wallach finds great dignity in the title character, an eighty-six-year-old Jewish widower, in Jeff Baron's sweet if predictable Upper West Side comedy. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

Wait Until Dark—Marisa Tomei and Quentin Tarantino star in a revival of Frederick Knott's 1966 suspense drama. Leonard Foglia is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St.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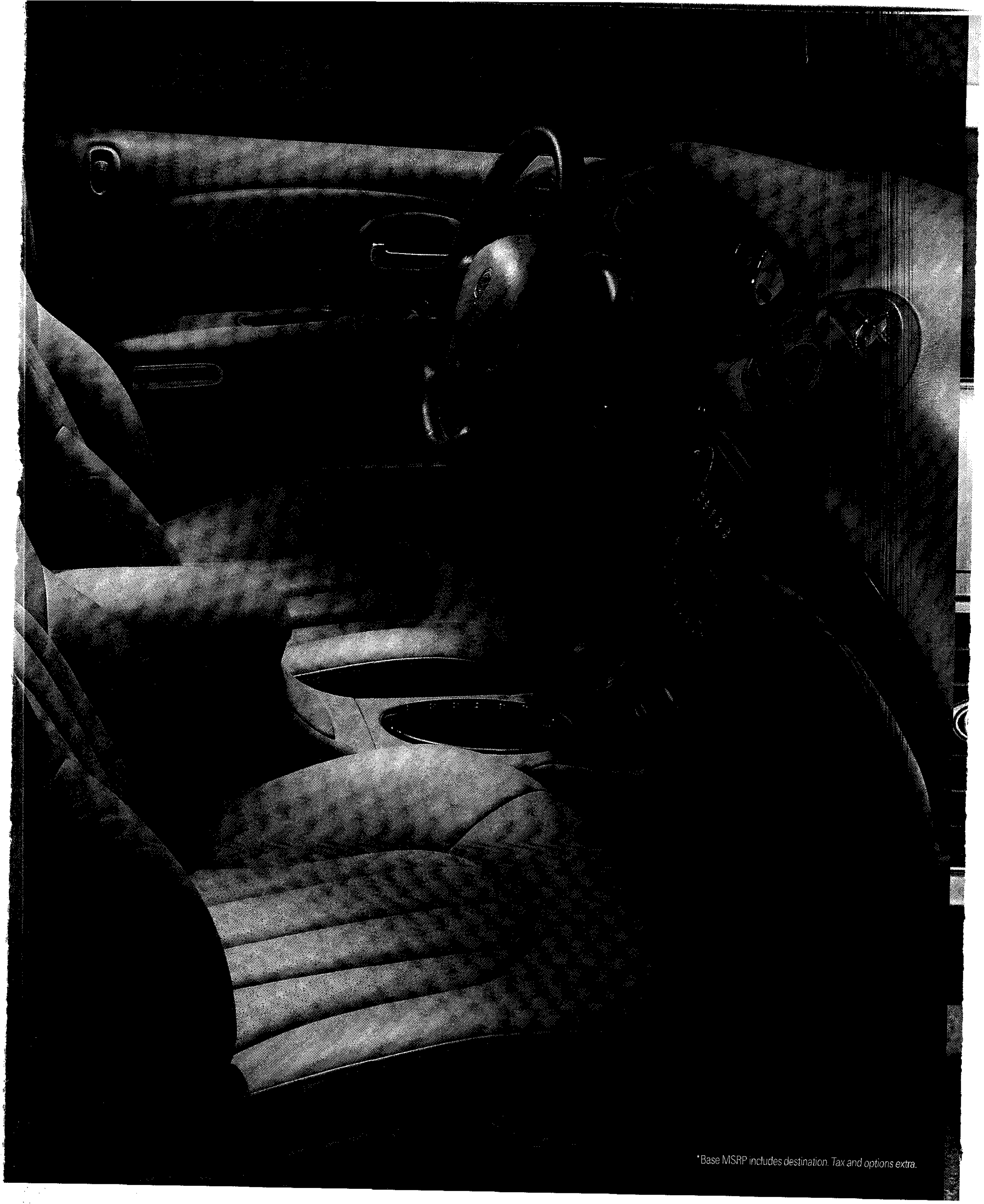

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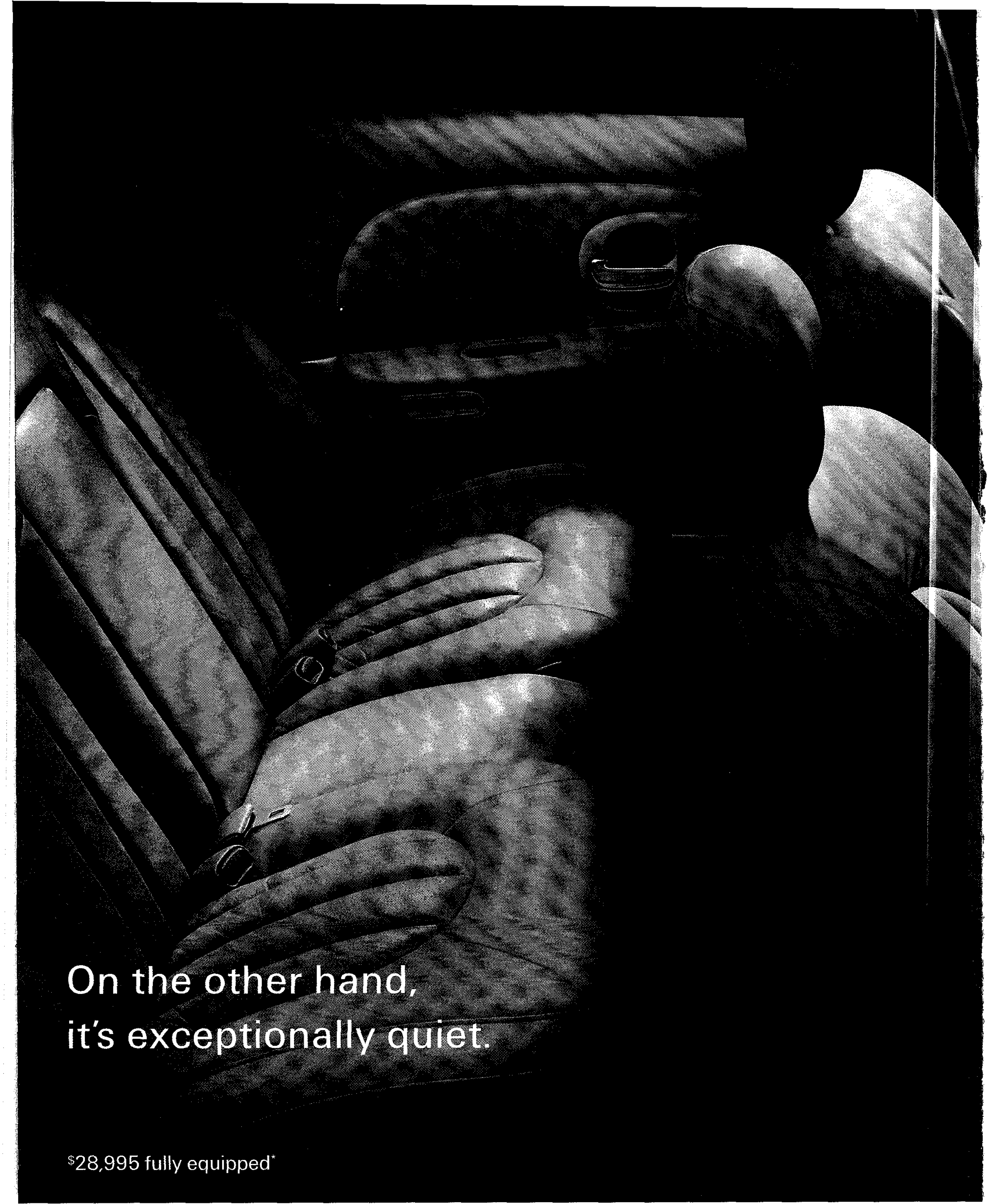
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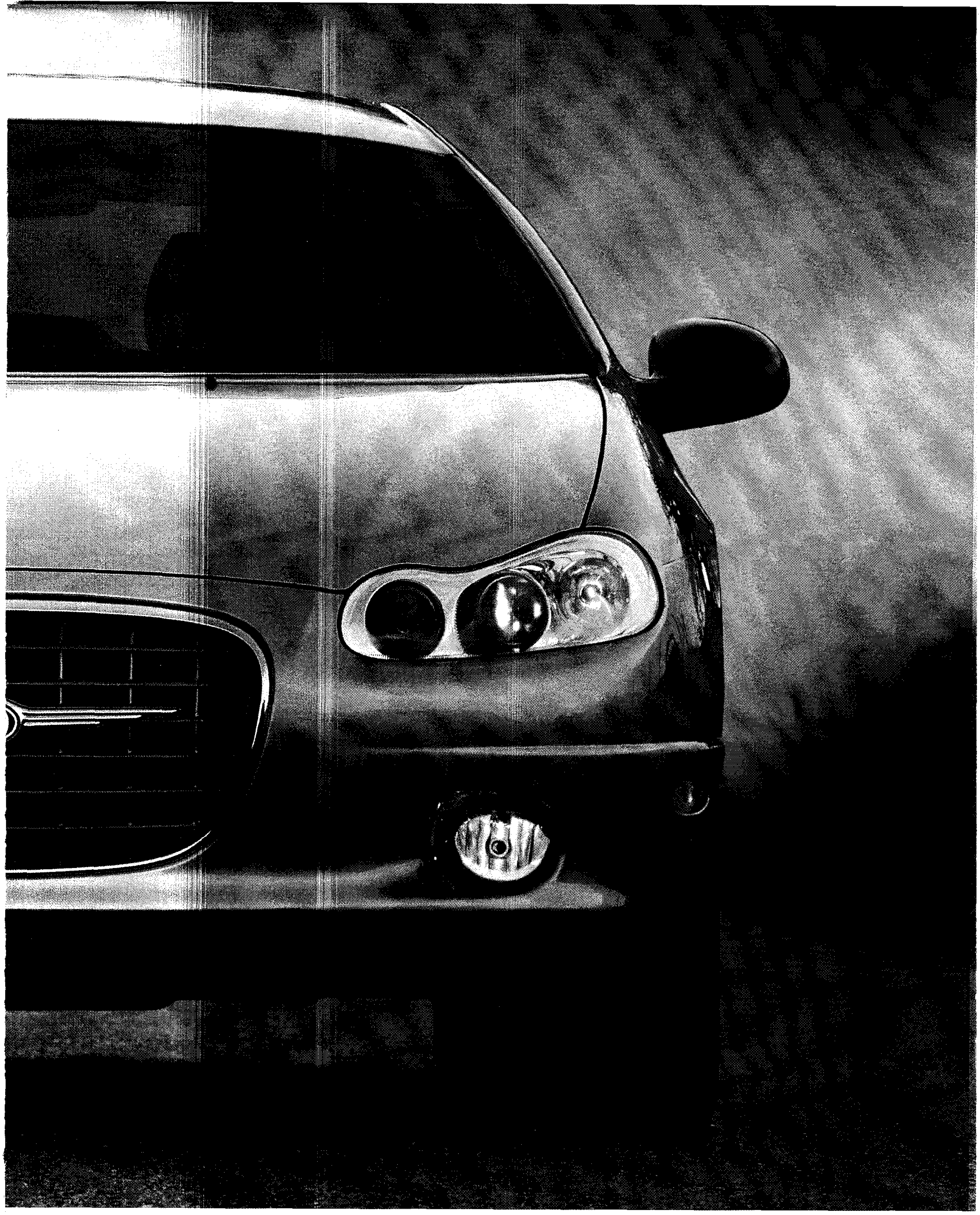

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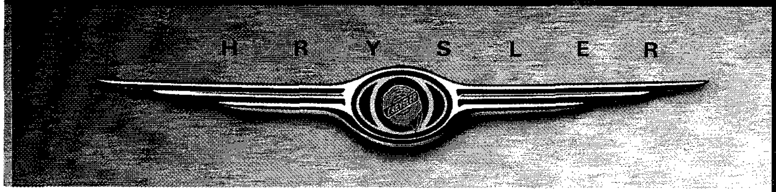
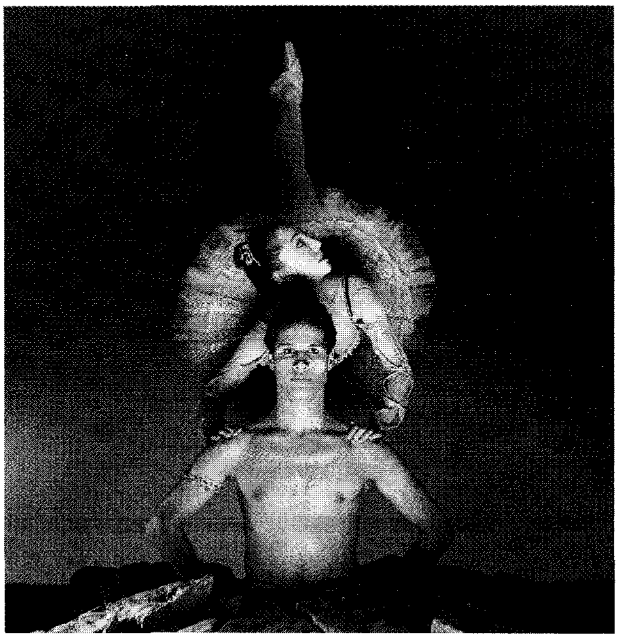


ENGINEERED TO BE GREAT CARS

239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200. (Closes June 28.) . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **THE SUNSHINE BOYS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200. (Closes June 28.) . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200.



Ashley Tuttle and Jose Manuel Carreño in the American Ballet Theatre's production of "Le Corsaire."

JOSEF ASTOR

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Final performances of the season. June 17 at 8: "Raymonda Variations," "In Memory of . . .," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ June 18-19 at 8: "Jewels." . . . ¶ June 20 at 2: "Symphonic Dances," "La Stravaganza," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ June 20 at 8: "Swan Lake," "In Memory of . . .," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ June 21 at 3: "Chaconne," "River of Light," and "The Four Seasons." . . . ¶ June 23-26 at 8, June 27 at 2 and 8, and June 28 at 3: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

American Ballet Theatre—June 17 at 2 and 8 and June 18 at 8: "Giselle." . . . ¶ June 19 and June 22 at 8 and June 20 at 2 and 8: The company première of "Le Corsaire." . . . ¶ June 23 and 25 at 8 and June 24 at 2 and 8: "The Snow Maiden." . . . ¶ June 26 and June 29-30 at 8 and June 27 at 2 and 8: "Coppélia." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 4.)

Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana—The Madrid-based company presents "Federico," an hour-long work about the poet Garcia Lorca, and "Flamenco Puro." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 16-19 at 8, June 20 at 2 and 8, and June 21 at 2 and 7:30.)

Doug Elkins Dance Company—Elkins has become so well known for his signature blend of socket-popping disciplines (hip-hop, club dance, break dance, wrestling takedowns, kung fu, etc.) that his growing sophistication as a choreographer has nearly been lost in the steady flashes of street wit. For his first Joyce season, he revives an early work, "The Patrooka Variations," and premières "Roda" and "Bipolarbear (NOS)." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 23-26 at 8, June 27 at 2 and 8, and June 28 at 2 and 7:30.)

DanceAfrica—This year's performances take on "African Roots in American Soil: Male Rites of Passage," with contributions from Iwisa, Mamadou Dahoué, and Sankofa Dance Theatre, among others. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. June 19 at 8, June 20 at 2 and 8, and June 21 at 3.)

Mark Morris Dance Group—The choreographer with the Pre-Raphaelite hair plays two roles in "Dido and Aeneas," the heroine and the sorceress, and presents a new work, "Medium," set to a score by John Harbison. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. June 24-27 at 7:30.)

Virsky—The sixty-one-year-old company (originally the State Academic Dance Ensemble of the Ukraine and renamed in 1975 for its longtime director Pavlo Virsky) presents elaborate theatrical versions of such folk dances as the high-jumping *hopak* and the Cossack spear dance. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. June 23 and June 26-27 at 8.)

Noche Flamenca—Just in time for the heat of summer, the premier flamenco ensemble returns to work up a sweat in its downtown stomping grounds. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 279-4200. June 16-20, June 23-26, and June 30 at 8; and June 21 and June 28 at 3. Through Aug. 15.)

Cortez & Co. Contemporary Ballet—The former Paul Taylor dancer Hernando Cortez presents solos and group works, including the première of "She Referred to 'The Evening' as If It Were a Person." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. June 17-21 at 8.)

Anna Myer and Dancers—The eight-member company in new and repertory works. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. June 18-21 at 8:30.)

Chen and Dancers—The troupe celebrates its twentieth-anniversary season with the première of "Warriors of Light," H. T. Chen's homage to Buddhism. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 349-0126. June 25-30 at 8:30.)

Central Park SummerStage—The capoeira choreographer Jelon Viera and his troupe perform the full-length "Serra Pelada" ("Bald Mountain"), set to the music of Caetano Veloso. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. June 17-19 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—June 23-25 at 8, June 26 at 8:30, and June 27 at 2 and 8:30: Ballet Hispanico. . . . ¶ June 25-26 at 8:15 and June 27-28 at 5: Bebe Miller Company. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL NEW YORK

"Trumpet Mentors"—They don't make trumpeters like Harry (Sweets) Edison, Joe Wilder, and Snooky Young anymore, and younger trumpeters like Warren Vaché, Byron Stripling, and Darryl Shaw know it. The three old masters will show how it used to be done while the protégés will display the lyricism and style that have rubbed off on them. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. June 17 at 8.)

"Harold Arlen in Jazz"—An impeccable aggregation of devoted mainstream players and singers, including Carol Sloane, Clark Terry, Ken Peplowski, and Barbara Carroll, pays tribute to the brilliant composer. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College. June 18 at 8.)

João Gilberto—The vocalist and guitarist who was instrumental in introducing bossa nova to the United States. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 19 at 8.)

"Monk & Mingus"—T. S. Monk's tentet and the Mingus Big Band each serve up the music of two of the most iconic and influential figures of modern jazz with fervor and invention. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. June 19 at 8.)

Jack DeJohnette / Leon Parker—Drummer DeJohnette, by now a father figure of contemporary jazz, looks toward Africa for an intercontinental union, while percussionist Parker single-handedly initiates a new beat generation. (Symphony Space. June 20 at 8.)

"A Tribute to Julian (Cannonball) Adderley"—The more young alto saxophonists try to mix funk and jazz, the more we miss Cannonball Adderley. His brother Nat, a former bandmate and chief champion of his sibling's music, presides over the afternoon. (Schomburg Center, Malcolm X Blvd. at 135th St. 491-2206. June 21 at 3.)

Rubén Blades y Son del Solar—The Panamanian salsa star. (Carnegie Hall. June 21 at 8.)

Steve Turre's Sanctified Shells / Howard Johnson & Gravity—Seashells and tubas have yet to eclipse trumpets and saxophones as the jazz horns of choice, but with Turre and Johnson as their tireless advocates, it's just a matter of time. (Symphony Space. June 21 at 8.)

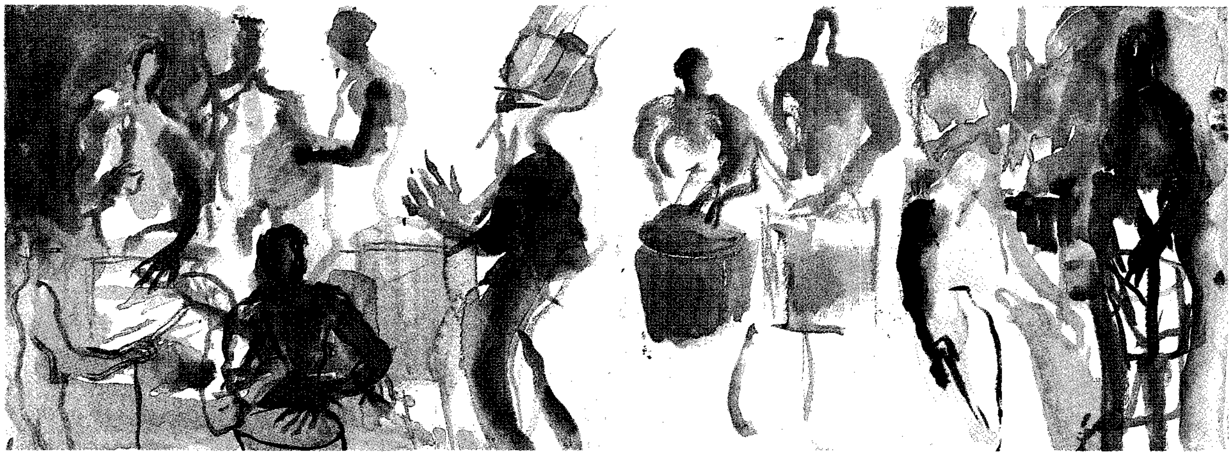
"We Remember Jimmy McPartland" / "The Rockin' Chair Lady & Red"—Jimmy McPartland, the priceless Beiderbeckeian trumpeter whose resonant playing graced Chicago jazz, swing, Dixieland revival, and mainstream jazz ensembles over a sixty-year career, receives an overdue salute. / The vibraphonist Red Norvo and vocalist Mildred Bailey, his onetime wife and partner, deserve to be fêted every day of the year for the marvellous subtlety they brought to the art of jazz. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College. June 22 at 8.)

"The Music of Bird, Diz & Bud"—Bebop is the name of the game here. Three indefatigable boppers—pianist Barry Harris, alto saxophonist Charles McPherson, and trumpeter Jon Faddis—praise those architects of modern jazz Parker, Gillespie, and Powell. (Symphony Space. June 22 at 8.)

Cassandra Wilson—The jazz vocalist. (Carnegie Hall. June 23 at 8.)

Jack McDuff and Friends—Funk is where you find it: for McDuff it's located in the Hammond organ; for pals David (Fathead) Newman and Hank Crawford it dwells in the tenor and alto saxophones, respectively. (Symphony Space. June 23 at 8.)

Brazilian Jazz Ensemble—It's a rare day that finds a New York appearance by any one of the Brazilian musical heavyweights João Bosco, Egberto Gismonti, Hermeto Pascoal, Toninho Horta, or Helio Delmiro; rarer still is the day that they all share a bill. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. June 24 at 8.)



The Brazilian percussionist Cyro Baptista and his ten-piece band, Beat the Donkey, at SummerStage.

DEBORAH ROSS

George Shearing Trio / Diana Krall Trio—If you're not expecting your life to be changed by the dynamism of their music, performances by the trios of pianist Shearing and vocalist-pianist Krall can bring a smile to your face. (Carnegie Hall. June 25 at 8.)

"Three Tenors"—Not the singers but the saxophonists: George Coleman, Chico Freeman, and Lew Tabackin, with their ensembles. Four walls should just about withstand the tonal onslaught of each of these robust players; but, if at any point they should team up, watch out. (Symphony Space. June 25 at 8.)

Chick Corea and Friends—Picking up on Art Blakey's secret, pianist Corea refreshes his music by surrounding himself with feisty young players; at seventy-one, drum legend Roy Haynes can still keep his virtuoso guests, pianist Danilo Perez and bassist John Pattitucci, on their toes. (Carnegie Hall. June 26 at 8.)

Jim Hall Trio / Tom Harrell Sextet—The poet laureate of jazz guitarists and the masterly trumpeter. (Symphony Space. June 26 at 8.)

Los Van Van / Jesús Alemañy's Cubanismo—The Cuban *songo* dance band and the Cuban trumpeter Alemañy's *descarga* combo. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. June 26 at 10.)

"Latin Jazz Jam"—Propulsive doings from two Latin icons: percussionist Tito Puente and vocal star Celia Cruz, both as young as yesterday; trumpeter Arturo Sandoval plays bop trumpet à la Havana. (Carnegie Hall. June 27 at 8.)

CONCERTS

Stevie Nicks / Boz Scaggs—The Good Witch of Rock and the silky-smooth soft-rocker. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. June 17 at 8.)

Cyro Baptista and Beat the Donkey—The Brazilian percussionist stirs up a storm in the Park with his spellbinding, booty-moving ten-piece ensemble. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary. June 19 at 7.)

The B-52s / The Pretenders—Break out those skinny ties. The other surviving collection of original swingers from Athens, Georgia, helps usher in a summer of New Wave wonders./Before there was Courtney or Shirley, there was Chrissie Hynde, who is still the iconoclastic female rocker par excellence. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. June 19 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Radio City Music Hall. June 24 at 8.)

Ani DiFranco—The whip-smart acoustic warrior, in a benefit concert. (The lawn in Battery Park. 307-7171. June 20 at 7.)

James Brown—The Godfather. (The Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. June 20 at 8.)

Nick Lowe—He may look like an august member of Tony Blair's cabinet, but Lowe is still one of rock's most distinguished ambassadors. Expect sterling rockabilly and some of the finest songwriting since Elvis Costello got paunchy. (Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. 921-1940. June 24 at 8.)

Midsummer Night Swing—Lincoln Center's annual dance-under-the-stars festival. June 24: "A Tribute to Kansas City," with Basie drummer and arranger Dennis Mackrel and his Manhattan Symphony Jazz Orchestra, saxophonist Frank Wess, and vocalist Kevin Mahogany. . . . ¶ June 26: El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico, the veteran thirteen-piece orchestra known as the "University of Salsa.". . . ¶ June 27: Texas blues guitarist Clarence (Gatemouth) Brown and friends. (The Plaza, Lincoln Center. Tickets available at the entrance. Shows begin at 8:15; dance lessons begin at 6:30.)

John Fogerty—The great Creedence Clearwater curmudgeon. (Jones Beach Theatre. June 25 at 8.)

"Celebrate Brooklyn!"—June 25: The Cajun dance band Beausoleil. . . . ¶ June 27: El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico (see Midsummer Night Swing, above). (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. All shows at 7:30.)

Paolo Conte—The suave Italian songsmith. (Supper Club. June 25 at 8.)

Peter, Paul & Mary—Still strong of spirit and pure of harmony. (Central Park SummerStage. For information about tickets, which are required, call 360-1399. June 29 at 5:30.)

Further Festival 1998—Featuring the Other Ones (or the Grateful Dead, minus Jerry Garcia), Rusted Root, and Hot Tuna. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. June 29 at 6:30. . . . ¶ Nassau Coliseum. June 30 at 6.)

Spice Girls—And then there were four. But with Sporty, Scary, Baby, and Posh still on board, those estrogen banks are far from depleted. Girl power! (Jones Beach Theatre. June 29 at 8.)

Prodigy—Now that the hype has faded, electronica's great black-and-white hope can revert to what it once was: a snotty techno band with a gift for head-banging hooks and muscular grooves. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center. June 29-30 at 9.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Acme Underground, 9 Great Jones St. (677-6963)—June 17: John Flansburgh's latest combo, **MONO PUFF.** June 19: **CHERI KNIGHT** drops in with some well-crafted country songs. With the country, folk, and rock sounds of the **HEALTH & HAPPINESS SHOW.** June 27: The critically acclaimed but commercially ignored singer-songwriter **AMY RIGBY.**

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—June 17: British cult folkie **JOHN MARTYN** preaches to the converted. June 25: Blues-guitar god **ROBBEN FORD.**

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—June 26: The **MEKONS**, or the band that wouldn't quit. Over the past nineteen years, this tenacious Leeds combo has evolved into a fine country-punk outfit with a bawdy sense of humor.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—June 17: Death metal with **SLAYER.** June 24: The **HEADHUNTERS**, with keyboardist **HERBIE HANCOCK.**

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—June 17: Parisian pop with **AUTOUR DE LUCIE** and New York City art rock with **BARBEZ.** June 26-27: **DIAMÁNDA GALÁS.**

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—July 17-18: **GIL SCOTT-HERON**, who's still fusing jazz and funk textures with sobering political rap. June 22: The Cuban a-cappella group **VOCAL SAMPLING.** June 24-26: R. & B. and jazz vocalist **DIANNE REEVES.** June 30: Legendary seventies d.j. and toaster **BIG YOUTH.** Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—June 18: Top-shelf hip-hop with **A TRIBE CALLED QUEST.** June 20: **GUIDED BY VOICES.** June 21: Raging, Wu-Tang-style rap from the **ROOTS.** June 24: Ecstatic Afro-pop with **KING SUNNY ADÉ.** June 26: **CPR**, a new combo featuring ex-con cum recovering folkie David Crosby. June 29-30: The breathtakingly sophisticated, emotionally daring songs of **LUCINDA WILLIAMS.** With singer-songwriter **JIM LAUDERDALE.**

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—June 18: The quixotic Cleveland six-piece art-punk outfit **PERE UBU** is back, with a new album called "Pennsylvania."

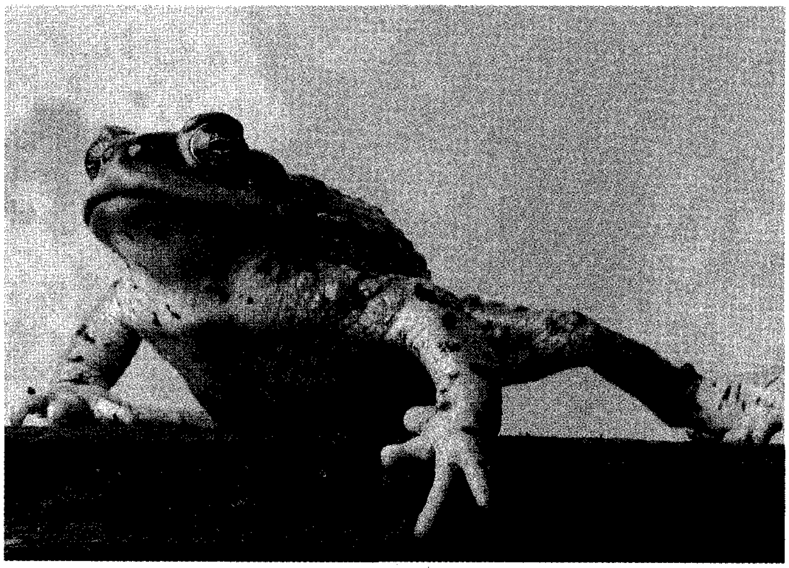
JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Through June 20: Sophisticated flugelhorn work from the **ART FARMER** quintet. June 24-25: Pianist and composer **MICHELE ROSEWOMAN** and her latest band, Foursight, which features trombonist **ROBIN EUBANKS.** June 26-28: Accompanied by three horn players from France, and fortified by a rhythm section featuring two kings of the pop studio scene—drummer **STEVE GADD** and bassist **ANTHONY JACKSON**—the gifted pianist **MICHEL PETRUCCIANI** will have orchestral heft to buttress his flamboyant technique. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through June 21: The **ELVIN JONES JAZZ MACHINE** and **BRIAN BLADE** and his **FELLOWSHIP.** The former Coltrane cohort Jones is more octopus than man, a brilliant drummer who produces multirhythmic currents that seem beyond the scope of the four-limbed./A young, in-demand drummer with novel ideas, Blade finds room for a pedal steel guitar as well as jazz horns in his innovative ensemble. June 23-28: An all-star tribute to Ella Fitzgerald, featuring **MARLENA SHAW, MILT JACKSON, TOMMY FLANAGAN**, and **FRANK FOSTER.** Dining.

In a past life I was a mermaid who fell in love with an ancient mariner. I pulled him into the sea to be my husband. I didn't know he couldn't breathe underwater.

once i was a court jester. i hated that damn hat.



In a past life I was pure, glacial spring water.

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IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—A growing number of young bop-based trumpeters pride themselves these days on understanding the inner workings of pre-bop styles, but **NICHOLAS PAYTON** (through June 21) is the one who sounds most comfortable playing them. June 23-28: The **ELLIS MARSALIS** trio. Marsalis—Big Daddy himself—is a model of pianistic decorum. The family name hasn't exactly been a drawback, but this elegant and supple stylist isn't riding on anybody's coattails.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Trumpeter **WALLACE RONEY** is in through June 21. The seventy-year-old altoist **LEE KONITZ** (June 23-28) has restored his confident manner and singular tone, and he's taking more risks than ever. Dining.

TONIC, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—June 24: This new venue opens with a night of improv by **JOHN ZORN** and guests. June 25: **DAVE DOUGLAS,** the first-call trumpeter for downtown projects of all bents. June 28: **DEREK BAILEY,** the poet of guitar noise, is accompanied by drummer **SUZIE IBARRA.**

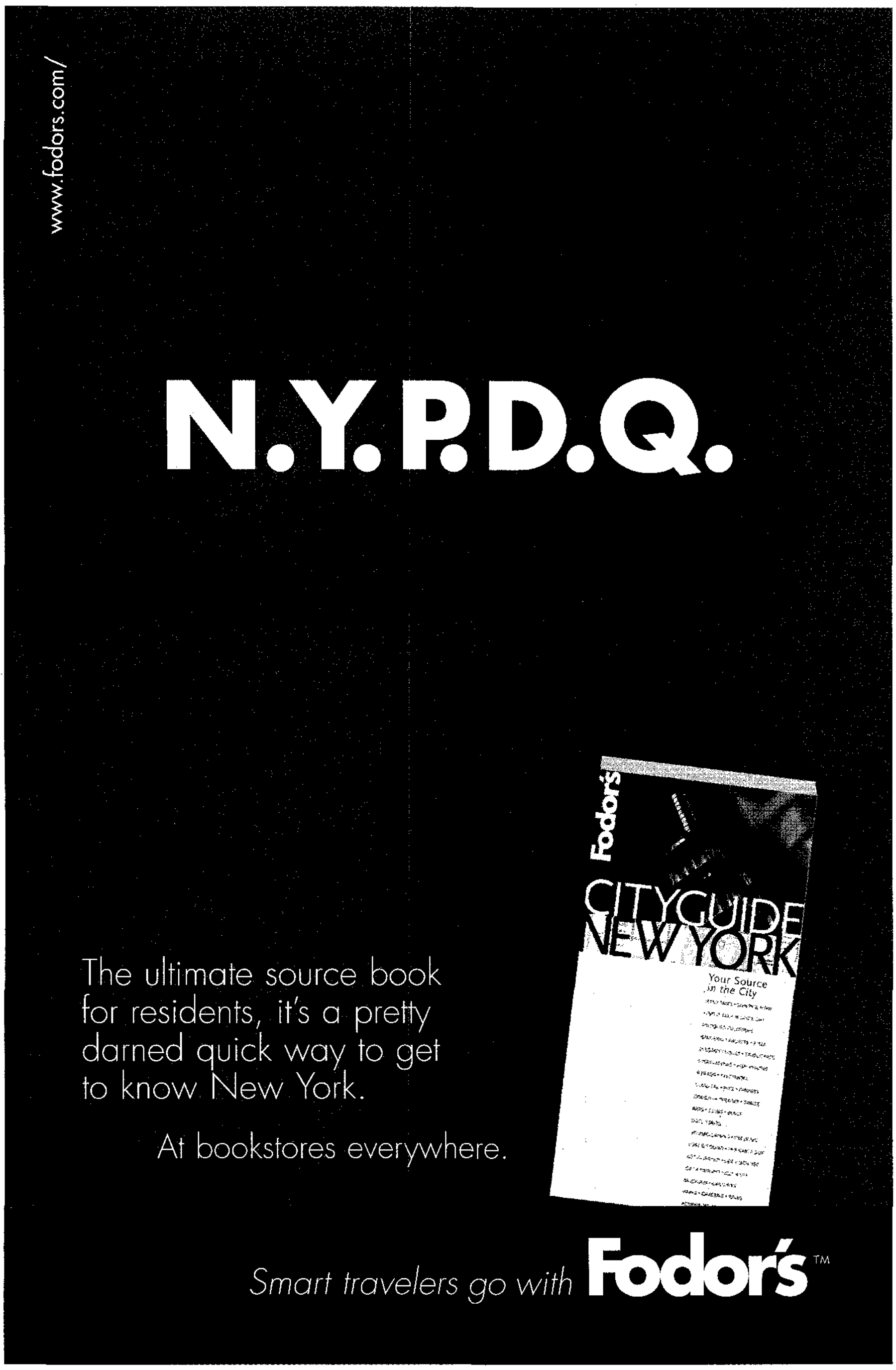
VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—**RAY DRUMMOND** (through June 21), New York's most reliable bassist (see also Zinno). When you lay down the kind of shag carpet that Drummond regularly does, just about anything on top sounds good. "The Bulldog" has vibist **STEVE NELSON,** pianist **KEVIN HAYS,** and drummer **BILLY HART** with him. June 22-24: The granddaddy of all Monday-night big bands, the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA,** celebrates its thirty-second anniversary. June 25-28: The oh-so-subtle **SHIRLEY HORN** uses her whisper of a voice, velvety piano runs, and proclivity for glacial tempos to explore the expressive corners of a song.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A trio of precision-tuned players—pianist **PETE MALIVERNI,** bassist **DENNIS IRWIN,** and drummer **LEROY WILLIAMS**—holds court through June 20. Three intrepid workhorses come together June 23-27: pianist **JAMES WILLIAMS,** bassist **RAY DRUMMOND,** and drummer **TONY REEDUS.**

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer," a splendid survey devoted to this great Pre-Raphaelite painter. The exhibition includes paintings, works on paper, books, stained glass, and tapestries that Burne-Jones executed in collaboration with his close friend William Morris, founder of the English Arts and Crafts movement. Burne-Jones was in every aspect immersed in the past—in medieval legends and fantasies, which form the basis of most of his pictures, as well as in his attention to Italian art from Giotto to Michelangelo. This febrile brand of historicism was, paradoxically, quite in tune with the temper of the Victorian age—entirely of its time even as it depicted anything that departed from it. Burne-Jones has been unfashionable for a century; this show reanimates him for the millennium. Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ "Ellsworth Kelly on the Roof," an installation of large-scale metal sculptures in the Cantor roof garden. . . . ¶ "American Ingenuity" features work-to-evening outfits by Anne Klein, Claire McCardell, Bill Blass, and others. At the Costume Institute, through Aug. 16. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part One: Calligraphy." Through June 28. . . . ¶ "Jean Dunand: Master of Art Deco." Through Oct. 25. . . . ¶ "The Paintings of Judith Rothschild: An Artist's Search." Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ "Native Paths: American Indian Art from the Collection of Charles and Valerie Diker." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)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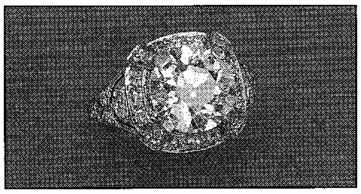

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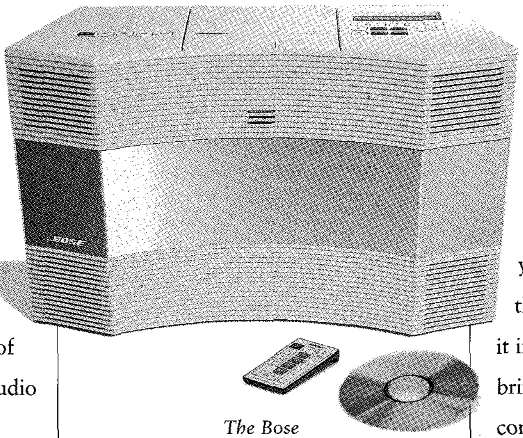

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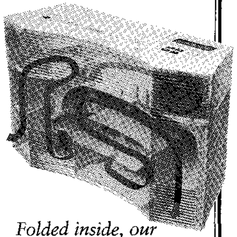

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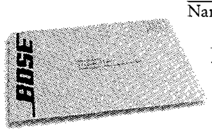


Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Bonnard," the first New York retrospective in thirty-four years devoted to the French painter Pierre Bonnard. Through Oct. 13. . . . ¶ "Projects 63: Karin Davie, Udomsak Krisanamis, Bruce Pearson, Fred Tomaselli." It's no secret that opticality—the sensorially rich overload of color, pattern, and apparent pulsation—is making a big comeback. The artists in the latest installment of the Modern's Projects series are part of this resurgence; they all seem eager to please, and for the most part their pictures deliver the expected wallop. Davie is perhaps the most conventional—she paints in good old oil on canvas. The others all opt for eccentric materials: Pearson favors lumpy wedges of Styrofoam; Tomaselli encases marijuana leaves and controlled pharmaceuticals, etc., in thick resin varnishes; and Krisanamis experiments with collages made from supermarket receipts, tea-stained newspapers, and even cellophane noodles. A striking and rewarding exhibition, although not one that would delight the late High Modern priest of opticality, Clement Greenberg. Through June 30. . . . ¶ "New Concepts in Printmaking 2: Willi Cole." Through Oct. 13. . . . ¶ "Giacometti to Judd: Prints by Sculptors." Through Oct. 13. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Peggy Guggenheim: A Centennial Celebration" chronicles the life of the art patron. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916): Danish Painter of Solitude and Light." Through Sept. 7. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

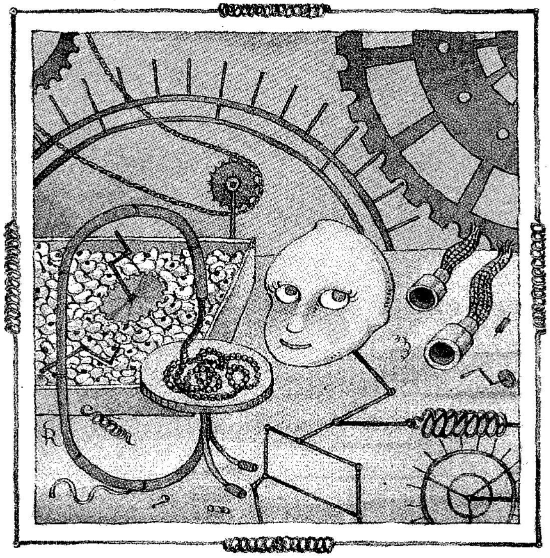
Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—Four video installations ("Bronx," "Roma," "Liquid Crystals," and "Baroque Cathodic Movements") by the Venetian artist Fabrizio Plessi. Through Sept. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—A mid-career retrospective of Charles Ray, one of the most discreet yet powerful artists to emerge from the raucous L.A. art scene. The show emphasizes Ray's work as a sculptor, from early sendups of Minimalism (a hollow black cube filled to the brim with printer's ink) to his more recent work with oversized department-store mannequins. There are, however, a number of compelling photo-Conceptualist pieces, such as "All My Clothes," a series of snapshots documenting the artist wearing, yes, every item in his wardrobe. One of the nicest things about the Ray show is its apparent modesty: only twenty-some works have been included, but they have been installed so that each one is allotted maximum breathing room, occasionally one per room. This is a welcome change from the average show by a living artist, which can be overcrowded with quite similar works. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "Unknown Terrain: The Landscapes of Andrew Wyeth" is the first exhibition devoted strictly to the landscapes of the immensely popular—and occasionally maligned—painter. Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent, and the American Watercolor Movement" showcases more than a hundred and fifty works from the museum's extensive collection. Through Aug. 23. . . . ¶ "Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court" displays crown jewels and other baubles, including the most celebrated sapphire in the world (before Kate Winslet's), a 260-carat specimen given by Alexander II to his wife. Through July 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"George Segal, a Retrospective: Sculptures, Paintings, Drawings." Through Oct. 4. . . . ¶ "An Expressionist in Paris: The Paintings of Chaim Soutine." Through Aug. 16. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, 22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City. (718-784-2084)—"Gordon Matta-Clark: Drawings Retrospective and Re-creation of Historic Projects." This tribute to Matta-Clark (1943-1978), the architect turned artist known for slicing chunks from houses and office buildings, is uncommonly thorough and restrained. It presents the most striking public projects without sensationalizing a man who, like his Earth Art colleague Robert Smithson, died on the cusp of something great. The exhibition includes documentary photographs, notes, and films of works like "Open House (Dumpster)" (1971), a makeshift gallery in a SoHo garbage receptacle, which is also re-created in the museum's outdoor galleries. Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)



Arthur Ganson's "Machines," at Ricco/Maresca.

SERGIO RUZZIER

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Isamu Noguchi (1904-88)—This American sculptor, who balanced the yin and yang of fine art and home décor, continues to mystify. He counters a trite knickknack like "Endless Coupling" (1988), depicting two red-granite dog bones in flagrante, with "Nameless" (1982-83), a half egg of basalt hewn in three parts, the surfaces polished to reveal the essence of the stone. And then there are the famous mirror-smooth basalt and granite fountains: three of these tables are here, overflowing magically into the gallery floor. Through June 26. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

"View: Four"—An international cast makes early-nineties-style slacker art: Cerith Wyn Evans's gold-plated pedestrian barrier recalls Cady Noland's dust corrals; Simon Periton's cut-foil doilies sprout post-punk barbed wire and anarchy symbols; and Maike Abetz and Oliver Drescher's semi-psychedelic paintings (with matching wallpaper) come so late in the disco-nostalgia cycle that they seem mummified. An oddly bloodless show for an oddly diffused art world. Through June 27. (Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

Short List—**robert berlind,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through July 17. . . . **george fitzpatrick,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; through July 17. . . . **shirley goldfarb,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through Sept. 4. . . . **diane andrews hall** and **guy pène du bois,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Both shows through June 26. . . . **ynez johnston,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through July 10. . . . **paul klee,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. 755-7288. Through July 23. . . . **yayoi kusama** and **robert filliou,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Both shows through Aug. 7. . . . **auguste rodin,** Channel Gardens, Rockefeller Center, Fifth Ave., at 55th St. Through Aug. 31. . . . **anne ryan,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through July 31. . . . **frank stella,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through June 26. . . . **joseph stella,** York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through June 30.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Arthur Ganson—Miraculous whirligig sculptures of the sort a ten-year-old might build if a ten-year-old could figure out how: an eggshell-clacking gizmo, a walking turkey-bone contraption, a rhythmical grease-squirter, a perpetual mechanical-worm machine, a chair that swirls into pieces and clops back together every few seconds. Noisy and eccentric in a refreshingly old-fashioned way. Through July 18. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.)

Larry Johnson—After a hiatus of several years, this L.A.-based artist with pronounced affinities with both Conceptualism and Pop has returned to New York with a startling show keyed to the topography of Los Angeles (both the social scene and the cityscape). These splashy and exciting works are, strictly speaking, photographs, although their judicious use of computer manipulation and drawing largely removes them from the realm of conventional photography. Through June 27. (I-20, at 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100.)

Tony Oursler and Mike Kelley—"The Poetics Project: 1977-97," a multimedia collaboration between two Conceptually inclined California artists which was originally presented last summer at Documenta X in Kassel, Germany. Combining painting, drawing, sculpture, video, and audio elements, the piece functions as a historical archive of the artists' interest in seventies Conceptualism and an account of their subsequent developments. Extremely difficult to take in all at once, but intermittently fascinating. Through Sept. 12. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. See also Galleries—Downtown.)

"The Las Vegas Project"—David Reed is one of those painter's painters whose work commands a small but often enthusiastic following. For years, he quietly pursued his own reanimation of the conventions of abstract painting, with occasionally striking results. Recently, however, he has been swept up by art-world fashion: he, too, has started making videos, or, rather, "video installations." Previous efforts incorporated sequences from "Vertigo" and videos of opening nights for his exhibitions. The current show seems not even that halfhearted: a bunch of abstractions punctuated by Michael Mann videos. Through July 3. (Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999.)

"Raugh"—The relocated Rosen gallery opens its new Chelsea digs with the work of Andrea Zittel, who can't seem to decide whether her art belongs in the pages of *ArtForum* or *Metropolitan Home:* the giant space is populated by furniture made from chunky, soft-foam "rocks" that resemble those seen in zoo environments or high-school productions of "Planet of the Apes." The style is called "Raugh" (which the

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artist pronounces “raw”). Through July 10. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

Short List—**TONY BELLAVER,** Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686. Through June 27. . . . **DOVE BRADSHAW,** Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through July 10. . . . **DEBORAH BROWN,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Sundays, noon to 5; through July 31. . . . **FERNANDO CANOVAS,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through June 24. . . . **PETER EDLUND,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through June 27. . . . **PETER KLARE** and **TOM MARTINELLI,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Both shows through June 27. . . . **STEFANIE NAGORKA,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through July 3. . . . **RICHARD PRINCE,** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9301. Through June 31. . . . **ILONA MALKA RICH,** Dorfman, 529 W. 20th St. 352-2272. Through July 2. . . . **DETLEF SCHNEIDER,** Au Base, 433 W. 14th St. 414-0563. Through July 2. . . . **RICHARD TSAO** and **MADELINE WEINRIB,** DeChiara Stewart, 521 W. 26th St. 967-6007. Both shows through July 18.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler—The SoHo half of Kelley and Oursler's auto-rockumentary is slightly less cacophonous than the Chelsea edition. The pair's multimedia paean to their late-seventies art-school band features interviews with cronies like L.A. artist Jim Shaw and a segment in which an actor reads their punk-rock poesy off cue cards. At turns brilliant and snotty, it's the victory cry/plaintive wail of a couple of CalArts geeks made good. Through July 31. (Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.)

Marc Quinn—Quinn made a splash at the height of the Damien Hirst craze with a cast of his head made with frozen blood (his own). His new work is at once pretentious and poignantly *retardataire:* huge, cyberpunkish casts of his body (in rubber, metal, and glass) which still recall Hirst. Through July 2. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.)

"Spectacular Optical"—An homage to and retrospective for the Canadian filmmaker David Cronenberg. Scattered among props from Cronenberg movies are works by artists with similarly creepy proclivities: Lutz Bacher's video of a diseased uterus; Julian LaVerdiere's impressively useless “fountain” of liquid nitrogen; a Tony Oursler talking skull; and, most Cronenbergian of all, Randall Peacock's perfectly dystopian “Snowman” (1998), a floodlit room furnished only with a clock radio. Through July 18. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520.)

"Transmissions"—Those who can't, curate: Exit Art invited dozens of art-world professionals to make videos that reveal their m.o., from the well known (MOMA curator Robert Storr) to the obscure (group-show carny Kenny Schacter). Though the spacious layout has a nice slumber-party feel, the videos are excruciating: Franklin Furnace director Martha Wilson fills hers with art-world chitchat on the tram to the Getty Center, while former White Columns curator Bill Arning simply films his shelves of art books. Through July 11. (Exit Art, 548 Broadway. 966-7745. Open Friday and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**REG BUTLER,** Kent, 67 Prince St. 966-4500. Through June 20. . . . **PAUL EDLIN,** American Primitive, 594 Broadway. 966-1530. Through July 2. . . . **NORMAN LEWIS,** June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 226-1660. Through July 2. . . . **JOAN PERSONETTE,** Courtyard Gallery, World Financial Center, 220 Vesey St. 945-0505. Through Aug. 9. . . . **TOMOKO TAKAHASHI,** The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through July 31. . . . **RICHARD TUTTLE,** A/D, 560 Broadway. 966-5154. Through July 31. . . . **ALESSANDRO TWOMBLY,** Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through June 27. . . . **CLAUDE WAMPLER** and **MUNGO THOMSON,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. 941-5711. Both shows through July 11.

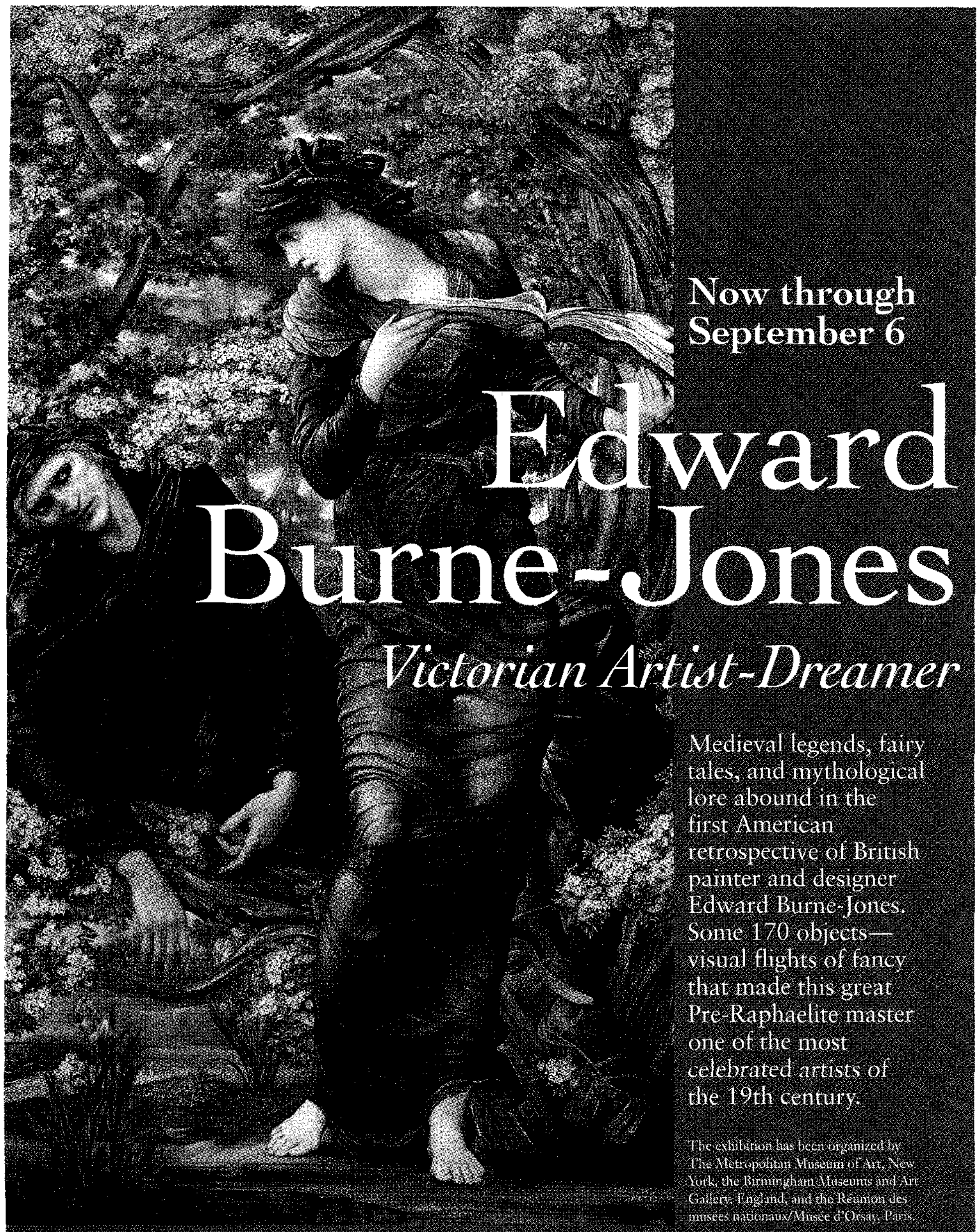
AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—June 18: American furniture, silver, decorative pieces, and folk art, including notable eighteenth-century pieces from the collection of the late Thomas Mellon Evans and Betty Evans. . . . ¶ June 19: The centerpiece of a Korean-art auction is a reticulated white-glazed porcelain brush holder from the early nineteenth century. . . . ¶ June 23: Watches. . . . ¶ June 24: Ancient, foreign, and United States coins and banknotes. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . At **CHRISTIE'S EAST:** June 18: Sales of animation art and of television and movie memorabilia, including the seventy-eight-page script for the legendary “Seinfeld” episode “The Contest,” signed by the four principal actors. . . . ¶ June 24: Judaica and Hebraica. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

Sotheby's—June 17: An auction of various items of Americana, including nineteenth-century paintings and quilts, as well as three hundred pieces of whaling art and memorabilia acquired over thirty years by Judith Ellis. . . . ¶ June 19: Americana from the collection of the late Thomas Mellon Evans and Betty Evans (which both of the city's major houses are purveying this week), including notable furniture from Newport, Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. . . . ¶ June 20: Animation art, including more than three hundred pieces—concept drawings, cels, production setups, and so on—created for Disney films since the nineteen-thirties. . . . ¶ June 22: Watches and clocks. . . . ¶ June 25: Garden statuary. . . . ¶ June 26: Books and manuscripts, including a single-owner collection of materials relating to P. G. Wodehouse. . . . ¶ June 29: Coins and medals. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Phillips—June 23: Antique and modern jewelry and watches. . . . ¶ June 30: Rare stamps and covers. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830.)

New York Academy of Art—A benefit auction (silent and live) of more than a hundred and seventy-five paintings, drawings, photographs, and sculptures, many by



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Medieval legends, fairy tales, and mythological lore abound in the first American retrospective of British painter and designer Edward Burne-Jones. Some 170 objects—visual flights of fancy that made this great Pre-Raphaelite master one of the most celebrated artists of the 19th century.

The exhibition has been organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, England, and the Réunion des musées nationaux/Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin* (detail), 1874, Board of Trustees, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, Liverpool, England (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight).

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the school's faculty, alumni, and students. (111 Franklin St., between West Broadway and Church St. June 17 at 7. For information, call 966-0300.)

ANTIQUORUM—An auction of five hunded rare clocks and watches includes a 1946 Patek Philippe eighteen-carat yellow-gold wristwatch (with round-button split-second chronograph, register, and tachometer) once owned by Duke Ellington. (Omni Berkshire Place Hotel, 21 E. 52nd St. June 20. For information, call 750-1103.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

MICHAEL ACKERMAN—"Smoke," a new series of photographs taken in Cabbagetown, an old industrial neighborhood in Atlanta. Through July 28. (Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 7, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

DAVID MALIN—A comet (Halley's), nebulae (Horsehead, Orion, Crab), galaxies (Sombrero, M83), and a supernova (1987A) are just some of the cosmic phenomena that vie for your attention in this good-looking show of large color work by a veteran astrophotographer. Through June 20. (Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363.)

"MAGNIFICENT JOINTS"—Seventy-five vintage photographs and daguerreotypes of skeletons, skulls, and other anatomical subject matter. Through July 4. (Kasher, 54 North Moore St. 966-3978. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6.)

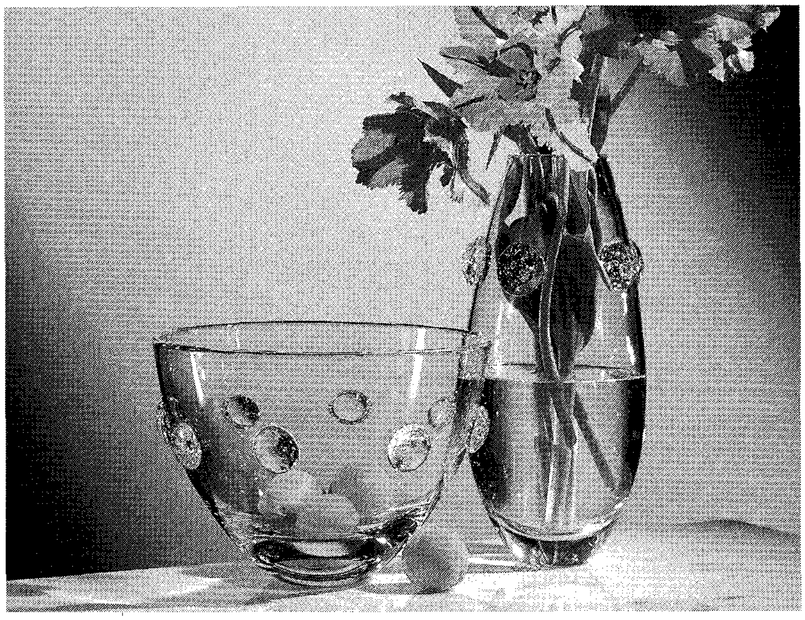
"MODERNIST MEXICAN VISTAS"—Photographs by Paul Strand, Anton Bruehl, and Marion Michelle. Through Aug. 1. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059.)

"POLICE PICTURES: THE PHOTOGRAPH AS EVIDENCE"—An exhibition of nearly a hundred anonymous photographs interspersed with works by Gardner, Atget, Riis, and Weegee. Through July 18. (Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 998-6780. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY—"Comparative Concepts: Photographs by August Sander, Karl Blossfeldt, Albert Renger-Patzsch, and Bernd and Hilla Becher." Through Sept. 13. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN—"Mathew Brady's Portraits: Images As History, Photography As Art," a travelling show of more than a hundred daguerreotypes, albumen prints, "Imperial" salted-paper prints, and cartes de visite. Through Sept. 6. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

SHORT LIST—**SANDI FELLMAN**, Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through June 27. . . . **DAVID GOLDES**, Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through June 28. . . . **LINDA MC CARTNEY**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through July 2. . . . **FRANK MAJORE**, Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through June 26. . . . **DIDIER MASSARD**, Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through July 3. . . . **HERBERT MATTER**, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway, 966-6223 (through July 11); and New York Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 673-6466 (open Mondays; through June 27). . . . **SCOTT MORGAN**, Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through June 27. . . . **LUIS GONZÁLEZ PALMA** and **JACQUES HENRI LARTIGUE**, Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Both shows through June 27. . . . **TOSHIO SHIBATA**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Through July 10. . . . **RAGHUBIR SINGH**, Feature, 76 Greene St. 941-7077. Through June 27. . . . **JOSEF SUDEK**, Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays; through Aug. 1. . . . **ANTONIO TUROK**, Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through June 21. . . . **JO ANN VERBURG**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through June 27.



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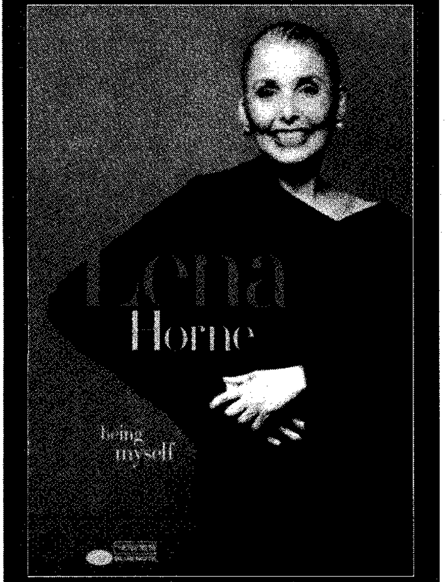

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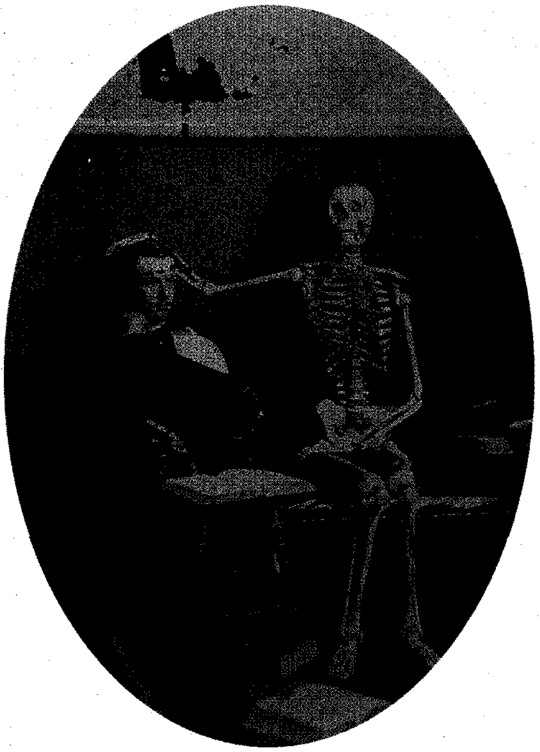

An anonymous tintype (circa 1900), in "Magnificent Joints," at Kasher (see Photography).

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—Free outdoor performances of operas in concert versions. IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA, with Theodora Hanslowe, Mark Oswald, Bruce Ford, and David Evitts; conducted by Eduardo Müller. (Cunningham Park, Queens. June 17.) . . . With John Osborn instead of Mr. Ford. (Marine Park, Brooklyn. June 29.) . . . With Sumi Jo, Dwayne Croft, Mr. Ford, and John Del Carlo; Mr. Müller. (Waterloo Village, Stanhope, N.J. June 20. . . . ¶ Central Park's Great Lawn. June 23. . . . ¶ Buccleuch Park, New Brunswick, N.J. June 26.) . . . ¶ IL TROVATORE, with Sondra Radvanovsky, Larissa Diadkova, Fabio Armiliato, and Haijing Fu; Marco Armiliato. (Gateway N.R.A.-Miller Field, Staten Island. June 19.) . . . With June Anderson instead of Ms. Radvanovsky. (Brookdale Park, Montclair, N.J. June 24. . . . ¶ Prospect Park, Brooklyn. June 30.) . . . With Ms. Anderson, Barbara Dever, Fabio Armiliato, and Gregg Baker; Marco Armiliato. (Cooper River Park, Pennsauken, N.J. June 27.) (Evenings at 8. For rain-date information, call 362-6000.)

"Arsilda, Regina di Ponto"—The Little Orchestra Society offers what seems to be the first performance in more than two and a half centuries of this Vivaldi opera, which was premièred in 1716, in Venice. Dino Anagnost conducts the Metropolitan Singers/The Greek Choral Society and vocal soloists. Actress Lynn Redgrave helps the audience follow the story's convolutions, which include all your favorite opera-seria plot devices: royal twins in disguise, gender confusion, an abduction, a shipwreck, and so on. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 17 at 7:30.)

"Out of the Night and Into the Light"—Encompass Music Theatre and AMAS Musical Theatre collaborate on this staging of three one-act operas: Dominick Argento's "Miss Havisham's Wedding Night," Victor Kioulaphides's "Ocean Dream," and Arif Mardin's "I Will Wait." John Yaffé conducts. (Salon Theatre, 432 E. 91st St. June 17, June 19-20, June 24, and June 26-27, all at 8, and June 21 and June 28 at 3. For information about tickets, call 594-7880.)

Opéra Français de New York—The ensemble offers a semi-staged production of Bizet's rarely performed opera "La Jolie Fille de Perth," with soprano Tracy Dahl, mezzo-soprano Lyne Comtois, tenor Gregory Mercer, baritone John Hancock, and bass-baritones Kevin Deas and Gérard Edery. Yves Abel conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 25 at 8.)

Amato Opera Company—A double bill of Arthur Sullivan's "Cox & Box" (his first operetta, composed without the benefit of a W. S. Gilbert libretto) and Donald Grantham's "The Boor" (based on a play by Chekhov). (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at Second St. 228-8200. June 26-27 at 7:30 and June 28 at 2:30. Through July 5.)

Center for Contemporary Opera—Stephen Paulus's opera "The Postman Always Rings Twice," with a Colin Graham libretto based on the James M. Cain thriller, was warmly received at its 1982 première at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and at subsequent productions in Boston, Minneapolis, Miami, Fort Worth, and Washington, and it became the first American opera ever presented at the Edinburgh Festival when the St. Louis production was staged there. Curiously, it has never been performed in New York, an omission that is rectified by this staging. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. June 29-30 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

Musica Sacra—Richard Westenburg directs the chorus and orchestra in Bach's Cantatas No. 24, No. 70, and No. 147. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. June 19 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 315-1936.)

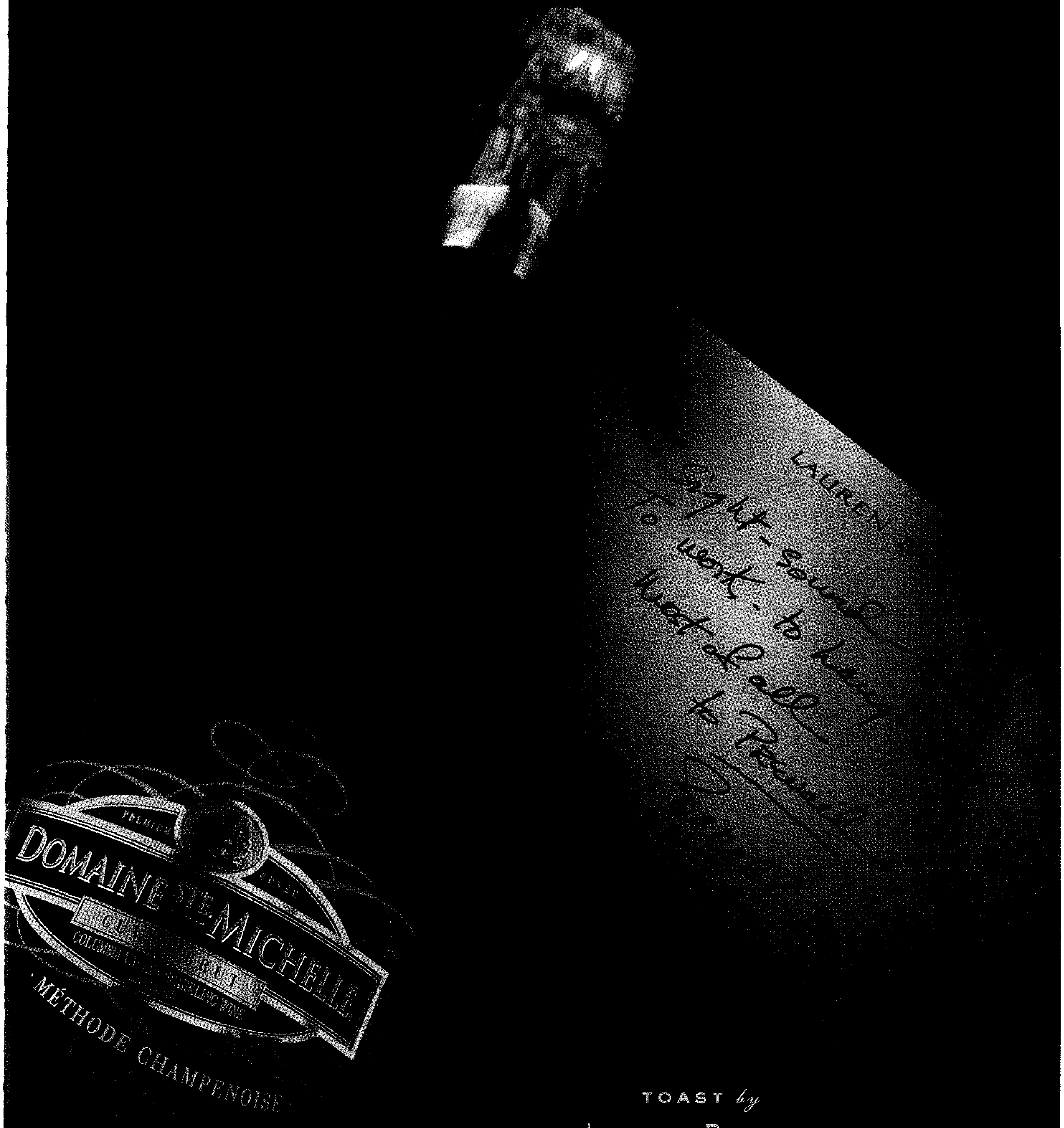
Goldman Memorial Band—David Eaton conducts music by Gershwin, Copland, Bernstein, and Ellington, among others. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 21 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson leads light classics in a free outdoor concert. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 22 at 8.)

Washington Square Music Festival—The outdoor series opens its fortieth season. June 23 at 8: The Festival Baroque Band performs concerti grossi by Telemann, Vivaldi, and Bach, in addition to Bach's Third Orchestral Suite. . . . ¶ June 30 at 8: Henry Schuman leads the Festival Orchestra in works by Mozart and Beethoven. (Southeast corner of Washington Sq. No tickets necessary. In case of rain, the June 23 concert takes place in Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St., and the June 30 concert in N.Y.U.'s Loewe Theatre, 35 W. 4th St.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—June 18 at 7:30 and June 21 at 4: Violinist Mark Peskanov, violist Toby Hoffman, and cellist Ronald Thomas play works by Piston and Mozart, including the latter's Divertimento in E-Flat Major (K. 563). . . . ¶ June 19 at 7:30: Pianists Randall Hodgkinson and Leslie Amper perform solo and four-hand compositions by Schumann (his "Waldszenen," Op. 82), Stravinsky ("Trois Mouvements de Petrouchka"), and Schubert (the "Grand Duo" in C Major). . . . ¶ June 25 at 7:30 and June 28 at 4: Kodály's Duo for Violin and Cello plus Beethoven's E-Flat-Major Piano Trio (Op. 70, No. 2). . . . ¶ June 26 at 7:30: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Ronald Thomas plays Bach's Unaccompanied Cello Suites No. 2, No. 4, and No. 5. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

The Western Wind—The vocal sextet celebrates its thirtieth anniversary with a program that ranges from Marenzio madrigals to settings of E. E. Cummings poems, by Peter Schickele, Elliot Z. Levine, and others. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. June 18 at 8. For information about tickets, call 873-2848.)

Salon Soirées—June 21 at 6 and 8: Cellist Wolfram Koessel and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform Beethoven's Cello Sonata No. 4 and Schumann's "Fantasiestücke," among other works. . . . ¶ June 28 at 6 and 8: Violinist Yosuke Kawasaki and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform sonatas by Mozart (in G Major, K. 302) and Beethoven (his Eighth), plus Sarasate's "Carmen Fantasy." (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. No tickets necessary.)

At the Mansfield—June 22 at 8: Pianist Makiko Hirata performs works by Poulenc, Sweelinck, and Prokofiev (his Sonata No. 2.) . . . ¶ June 29 at 8: Flutist Mindy Kaufman and pianist Marc Ponthus perform Boulez's Sonatine and works by Debussy and Varèse. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. No tickets necessary.)

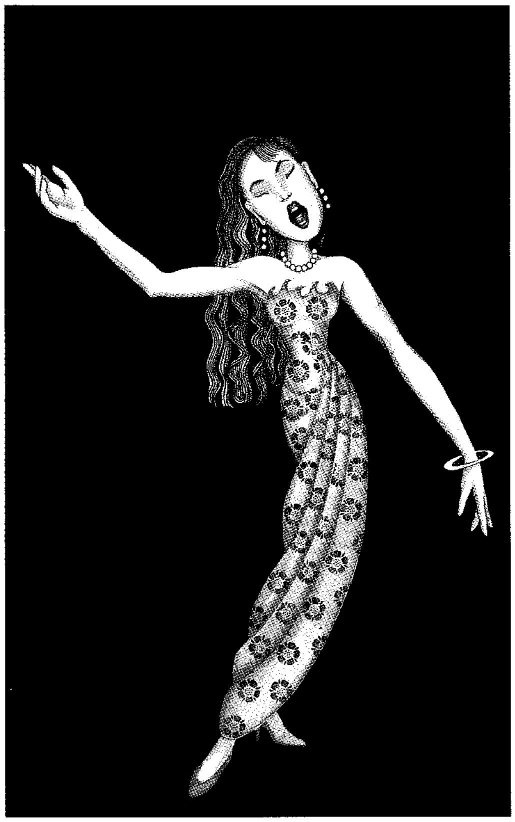
Mahler Madness—In 1995, the jazz pianist Uri Caine unveiled several highly experimental Mahler arrangements to accompany a silent film about the composer. The project proved addictive, and he expanded the corpus to eleven items (based on material from the Symphonies No. 1, No. 2, and No. 5, "Das Lied von der Erde," and three of the orchestral song cycles); all were recently released in stunning performances, under the title "Urlicht/Primal Light" (on the German Winter & Winter label 910-004-2, distributed in this country by Allegro Imports). Mahler purists may be outraged by the results, but listeners attuned to the composer's anguished sensibility are more likely to find themselves entranced when one of the "Kindertotenlieder" emerges as a lazy bossa nova, or when a louche cabaret interpretation of the Fifth Symphony's Funeral March erupts in a frenzy of panic. Ten musicians join Caine in live performances of this fascinating take on tradition, in a setting celebrated for musical adventure. (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. 219-3055. June 30 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

Caramoor—Opening concerts of the festival's fifty-third season, which runs through Aug. 9. June 20 at 7: Music by Mozart, Bellini, and Paganini, with soprano June Anderson among the soloists. . . . ¶ June 21 at 4:30: The St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble plays all six of Bach's "Brandenburg" Concertos. . . . ¶ June 26 at 8: Mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux and pianist Martin Dubé offer songs and arias by Rossini. . . . ¶ June 27 at 8:30: Peter Oundjian leads the Orchestra of St. Luke's in Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" Suite, Mozart's Clarinet Concerto (featuring Richard Stoltzman), and Schubert's Symphony No. 4 (the "Tragic"). . . . ¶ June 28 at 4:30: Mr. Stoltzman and colleagues offer clarinet trios by Mozart, Bartók, and Brahms. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

Opera Festival of New Jersey—Opening performances of the season, the company's first in a fully professional theatre. June 20 and June 26 at 8 and June 28 at 2: "The Marriage of Figaro," performed in English. . . . ¶ June 27 at 8: "Tosca." (McCarter Theatre, 91 University Pl., Princeton, N.J. 609-683-8000. The season continues through July 19.)

Music Mountain—Where up-and-coming string quartets hang their hats. June 21 at 3: The Da Ponte String Quartet plays Stravinsky's Concertino and Three Pieces for String Quartet, Beethoven's Quartet in F Major (Op. 59, No. 1), and (with pianist Hugh Sung) Dohnányi's Piano Quintet. . . . ¶ June 28 at 3: The St. Lawrence String Quartet performs Beethoven's Quartet in E-Flat Major (Op. 74), R. Murray Schafer's "String Quartet with Tai Chi Accompaniment" (with two tai-chi practitioners assisting), and Mozart's E-Flat-Major Piano Quartet (with Leonard Hokanson). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. The season's classical concerts continue through Sept. 6.)



Soprano Sumi Jo, appearing with the Metropolitan Opera in the Parks.

VIRGINIA HATLEY

Tanglewood—Management disputes in the past year have pounded some of the stuffing out of the nation's most prominent music festival, but the concert presentations are affected less than the Berkshire Music Center's educational activities are. Several concerts lead up to the official opening of the festival's season on July 3. June 26 at 8:30: The Boston Symphony Chamber Players perform Britten's "Phantasy" Quartet and two works by Schubert: his String Trio in B-Flat Major and his Octet. . . . ¶ June 27 at 8:30: Quartets by Berg and Beethoven (in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3, and in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3), played by the Juilliard String Quartet. . . . ¶ June 28 at 2:30: Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll," Yehudi Wyner's French Horn Trio, and two Mozart serenades ("Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" and the C-Minor Wind Serenade), performed by the Boston Symphony Chamber Players. (Lenox, Mass. 413-637-1600.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"Centennial Weekend"—New York City celebrates its hundredth anniversary this year, and hundreds of events—walking tours, concerts, free admission to museums and cultural institutions, street fairs, and parades—are planned for the days and nights between June 19 and June 21, highlighted by a simultaneous fireworks display in all five boroughs, on June 20 at 9:30. For more information, call 877-8984 or visit www.nyc100.org.

"Circus Sundays"—David Sharps, a professional clown who owns a restored railroad barge in Red Hook, Brooklyn, presents performances by Russian acrobats, a twelve-year-old juggler, a trained pig, and other vaudeville acts. (290 Conover St., Brooklyn. June 21 and 28, from 2 to 4:30. For more information, call 718-624-4719.)

Readings—June 17 at 6: By Alan Helms, Elena Georgiou, Lloyd Schwartz, and other contributors to the anthology "Too Darn Hot: Writing About Sex Since Kinsey." (The New Museum, 583 Broadway. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 17 at 7:30: By Max Blagg, from his novel, "Diving for Blondes." (S. J. South & Sons, 273 Church St., between Franklin and White Sts. For reservations, call 219-0640.) . . . ¶ June 18 at 7:30: By Ann Beattie, from her new collection of short stories, "Park City," and Andre Dubus, from his new collection of nonfiction, "Meditations from a Movable Chair." (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—June 18 at 6:30: Ellen Handy, associate curator at the International Center of Photography, considers the role of women in the history of photography. (William Doyle Galleries, 175 E. 87th St. For free tickets, which are required, call 427-2730, ext. 600.) . . . ¶ June 19 at 6: Filmmaker Ric Burns and critic Margo Jefferson discuss the history of New York City and screen a portion of Burns's new documentary, "New York." (Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 5 Union Sq. W. For reservations, which are required, call 691-6590.) . . . ¶ June 26 at 7:30: Monologuist Eric Bogosian performs excerpts from his latest show, "Kicks Against the Pricks." (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.)

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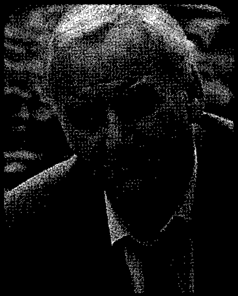
Poirot Week
Starts Monday 6/29

Sherlock Holmes Week
Starts Monday 7/6



Inspector Morse Week
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BOOK CURRENTS

Summer Reads

FIVE *New Yorker* writers offer their thoughts on the sometimes vexing problem of what to read in the hammock:

RIGHT now I'm reading the ARGONAUTIKA, by Apollonius of Rhodes; that is, my husband reads it to me, evenings, for as long as it takes me to stir the risotto or the polenta that, summers in Italy, we often have for dinner. I used to stir risotto to the solemn rhythms of late Eliot; for polenta, I found that John Ashbery's FLOW CHART set a nice pace. But what I really needed was something more hypnotic than sublime. Apollonius isn't Homer—he was the librarian of third-century-B.C. Alexandria—but he tells a whopping, utterly lurid, and, happily, familiar story—which is to say that you know Jason gets the fleece, and it doesn't matter if you miss a line or two beating in the cheese. Homer is serious winter reading. Apollonius is the man the Hellenes sneaked to the beach. —JANE KRAMER

RANDALL JARRELL'S PICTURES FROM AN INSTITUTION is a screwball comedy of American academe in the forties. It has more gemlike put-downs and paradoxes than any other novel of its kind. Of the college president it is said, "At first President Robbins talked a little stiffly and warily, but then he warmed to himself." Sona Rasmussen, a local sculptor and furniture maker, causes chaos during Art Night: "People persisted in sitting down in her sculpture, and in asking, 'What is that named?' of her chairs." And the emigré composer Gottfried Rosenbaum explains his music by saying, "De devil soldt me his soul." —ALEX ROSS

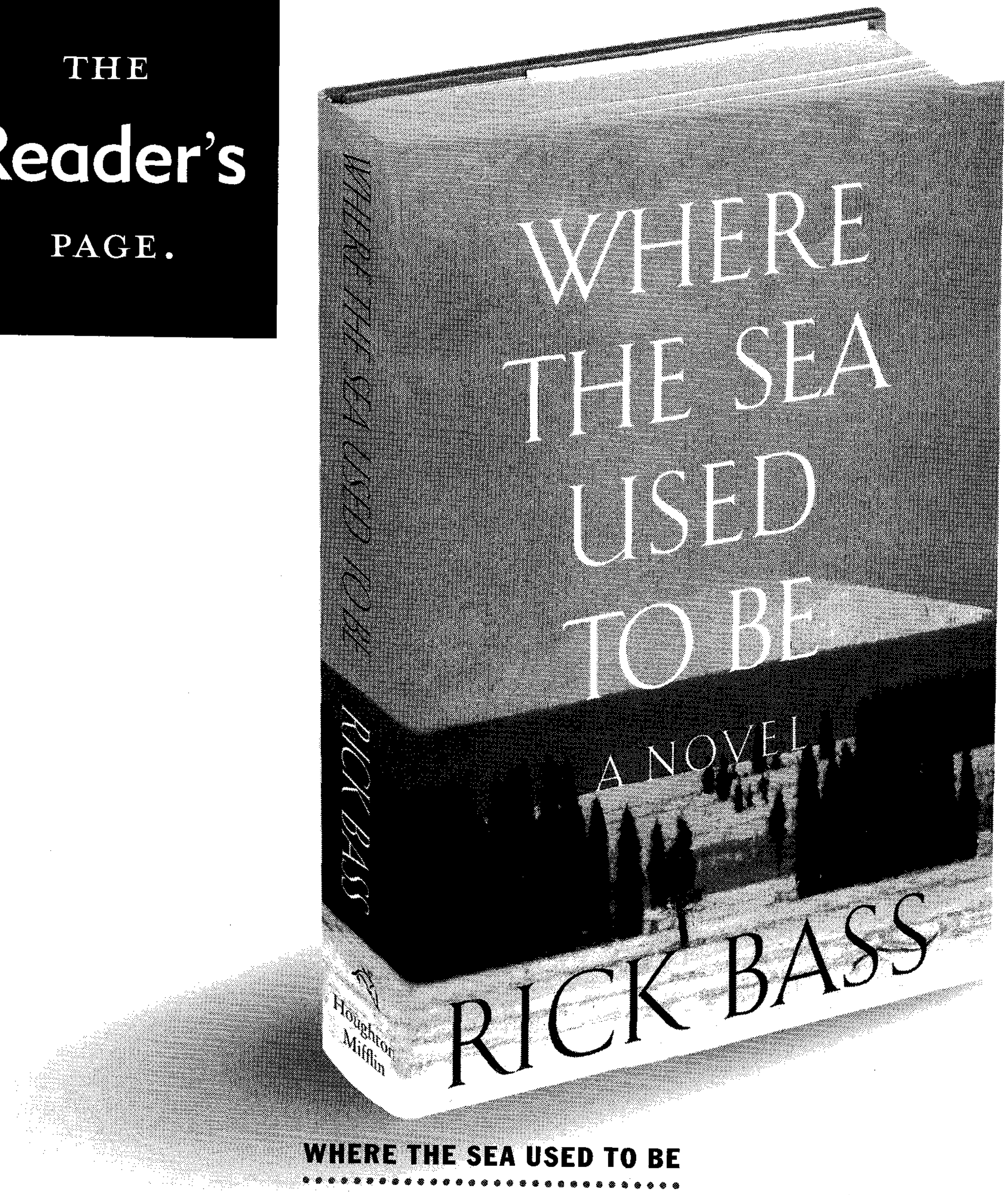
IMAGINE lying in a hammock on a summer day (I'm going to Cape Cod and we have a hammock, so it's not too much of a stretch) and rereading Nathanael West's MISS LONELYHEARTS; THE MAKING OF THE MODERN MIND, by John Herman Randall, Jr.; anything about Albert Einstein by Gerald Holton; SEVEN MEN, by Max Beerbohm; THE DISUNITING OF AMERICA, by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.; H. L. Mencken's THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE (all volumes, *carefully*); and, to induce sunlit slumber, any of Edward Stratemeyer's ROVER BOYS books, in which you'll encounter once again the dreadful phrase "A general laugh went round." —PHILIP HAMBURGER

FOR decades now, Aharon Appelfeld has been writing brief and brilliant novels that are not truly about the Holocaust but around it. BADENHEIM, 1939 comes just before, for example, and THE IMMORTAL BARTFUSS comes just after. But in all Appelfeld's books the subject is invariably the apocalyptic fall from innocence the Holocaust represents both to the Jewish people and to mankind—the sense of relative innocence before and the terrible, irredeemable darkness after. Of all the leading Israeli novelists—David Grossman, Meir Shalev, Amos Oz, A. B. Yehoshua—Appelfeld is the least Israeli. His world has fallen so profoundly that one half expects him to write not in Hebrew (as he does) but in Yiddish. —DAVID REMNICK

WHEN I was little, my family rented a series of houses on Cape Cod for the month of August. Once we'd arrived at a new house, I'd snoop around, as if I were Nancy Drew trying to solve "The Secret of the Summer Rental," to see what books the previous occupants had left behind. In every house, it was almost the same: down low in a weather-warped bookcase were a Reader's Digest Condensed Book or two, a best-seller from a few years back, and a paperback copy of TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST, by Richard Henry Dana. Though there was always some *confusion in my mind about the title (in front of* the mast? before the mast *got* there? *what* mast?), I did know that the book was about life at sea but in a serious, bracing way—that it wasn't a mere thrill-packed adventure story. Somehow, I also knew—you just know these things, even at seven—that nobody read this book anymore, and that made me cherish it. For me, thinking about "Two Years Before the Mast" conjures up summer itself: exploring places on my own, feeling alone but not empty, and having secret thoughts about going off to sea. I still have those thoughts (and two years would be about right), and perhaps this summer I will finally read the book that inspired them. —NANCY FRANKLIN

MARCELLUS HALL

THE
Reader's
PAGE.


WHERE THE SEA USED TO BE
A NOVEL
RICK BASS
WHERE THE SEA USED TO BE
RICK BASS
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WHERE THE SEA USED TO BE

by Rick Bass

In this, the first full-length novel from one of America's finest writers of fiction and nature writing, Rick Bass brings us again to the remote wilds of Northern Montana. Wallis is a young geologist, apprenticing for the brutish Texan oil baron, Old Dudley, who banishes Wallis to an isolated snowy cabin in Montana's Swan Valley. Once there, he is to dream of the oil that lies deep beneath miles of rock and ice, and to live with Dudley's daughter, Mel. At once beautiful and fiercely strong, Mel has spent twenty years painstakingly mapping the movements of the valley's only surviving wolf pack. With a longing voice and the eye of a poet, Rick Bass renders in rich detail life's tentative relationships: those between people, and to the environment in which they live. (Houghton Mifflin)

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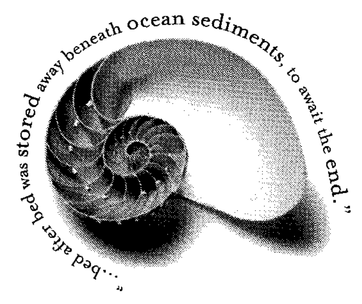
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THE MOVIES

OPENINGS

Buffalo '66—Vincent Gallo wrote, directed, and stars in this romantic tale of a young ex-con who kidnaps a girl (Christina Ricci) so she can pose as his wife to impress his parents (Anjelica Huston and Ben Gazzara). Opening June 26.

Carla's Song—A Glasgow bus driver (Robert Carlyle) and a Nicaraguan refugee (Oyanka Cabezas) find love when they travel to Nicaragua during the revolutionary fighting in 1987. Directed by Ken Loach. Opening June 26.

Dear Jesse—Gay filmmaker Tim Kirkman's documentary takes a look at his home state of North Carolina and its senator Jesse Helms. Opening June 26. (Cinema Village.)

Dr. Dolittle—Eddie Murphy plays the doctor who has the ability to talk to the animals, in this comedy directed by Betty Thomas. Opening June 26.

Dream for an Insomniac—A comic love story about an insomniac (Ione Skye) who tries to convince a new friend (Mackenzie Astin) that he is in love with her. Written and directed by Tiffanie DeBartolo. Opening June 19. (Village East Cinemas.)

Hav Plenty—A love story about opposites—a wealthy young lady and a would-be novelist—written, directed, and starring Christopher Cherot. Opening June 19. (Angelika Film Center and Sutton.)

Henry Fool—Hal Hartley's story of a garbageman (James Urbaniak), his mother (Maria Porter), his sister (Parker Posey), and a mysterious stranger (Thomas Jay Ryan) who changes their lives. Opening June 19. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

I Went Down—A black comedy by director Paddy Breathnach and screenwriter Conor McPherson about a mob kidnapping in Ireland. Opening June 24. (Village East Cinemas.)

Junk Food—Tokyo is the setting for a series of interconnected stories by writer-director Masashi Yamamoto. In Japanese. Opening June 24. (Film Forum.)

Little Boy Blue—Ryan Phillippe stars in the tale of a young man's struggles within his troubled family. Directed by Antonio Tibaldi. Opening June 19. (Quad Cinema.)

Marie Baie des Anges—Writer-director Manuel Pradal's drama of a summer of discovery for two teen-agers (Vahina Giocante and Frederic Malgras) on the Riviera. In French. Opening June 19. (Film Forum.)

Mulan—Disney's thirty-sixth animated film is based on a Chinese legend about a young girl who, pretending to be a boy, joins the army to fight the Huns. Opening June 19. (Chelsea West, Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Off the Menu: The Last Days of Chasen's—A documentary about the closing of the famous Hollywood restaurant. Directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini. Opening June 19. (Quad Cinema.)

Out of Sight—George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez star in an adaptation of Elmore Leonard's romantic crime story of an escaped bank robber and a federal marshal. Directed by Steven Soderbergh, screenplay by Scott Frank. Opening June 26.

Smoke Signals—The tale of two young Indian men who travel from their reservation in Idaho to Phoenix on a journey of self-discovery. Written by Sherman Alexie and directed by Chris Eyre. Opening June 26.

Voyage to the Beginning of the World—Marcello Mastroianni plays a film director in Portugal who accompanies a young actor on a search for his roots. Written and directed by Manoel de Oliveira. In Portuguese and French. Opening June 26. (Quad Cinema.)

The X-Files—Writer Chris Carter brings his television heroes, F.B.I. special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), to the big screen. Directed by Rob Bowman. Opening June 19.

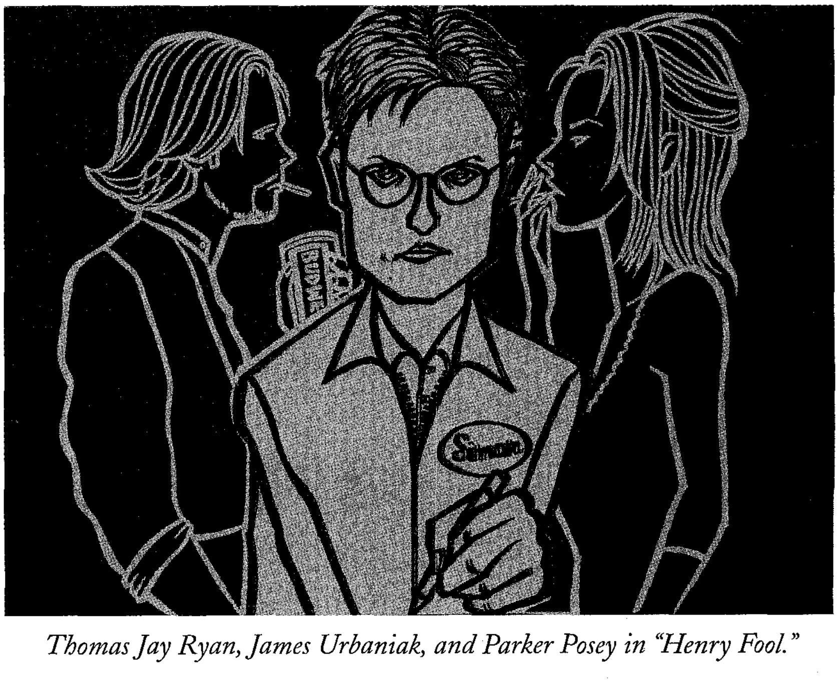
FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Un Air de Famille (Family Resemblances)—The fourth feature from director Cédric Klapisch, a graduate of the N.Y.U. film school, is a tight, depressing comedy of manners—or, at any rate, of increasingly bad manners. A family gathers at a crummy café in a French provincial town; any hopes of a smooth evening start to blister almost immediately. The mother (Claire Maurier) favors one of her adult sons and disdains the other; each, needless to say, is unhappy in his own way. There is also a belligerently unmarried daughter (Agnès Jaoui) and a birthday girl, Yolande (Catherine Frot), who buckles under her first glass of champagne. Klapisch steeps his cast in an authentically sick and yellowing light, and there's real confidence in his timing: just as things calm down, the old emotional friction kicks back in. But the film is a struggle; it was originally a stage play by Jaoui and her co-star, Jean-Pierre Bacri, and it still feels sullen and cramped. Anyone who warmed to Klapisch's previous picture, "When the Cat's Away," with its rough and breezy obliqueness, will feel shrunken by the new work; what saves it is Catherine Frot, whose tipsy dance routine, revelling in indignity, seems like a brief and wondrous escape. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

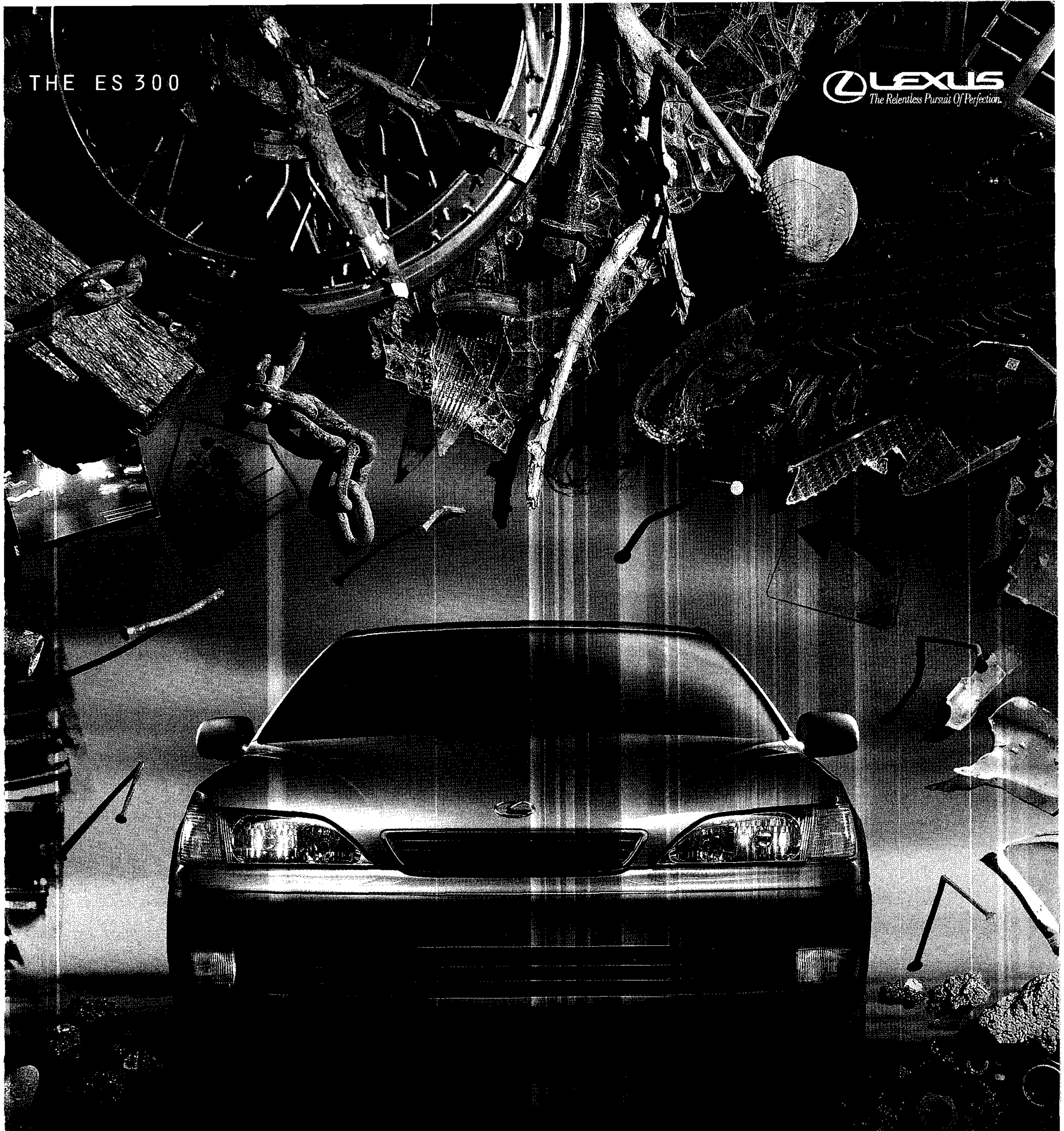
Bulworth—Warren Beatty's fascinating high-wire act about a senator who thinks he can solve the country's ills by becoming a member of the hip-hop nation. It's an audience pleaser, at times funny and irreverent, but its condescending views on race relations and Beatty's civic-lesson street raps more often reduce the comedy to the level of polemic. Beatty's best work comes opposite the supporting actors; the performances of Halle Berry, Don Cheadle, and particularly Oliver Platt, as a harried spin-control operative, manage to lift the film above its failed-liberalism treatise. But even though the movie is fun to watch, crass and energetic when it needs to be, it's ultimately as phony as an old Frank Capra picture.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea West, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas—Could there be a harder book to adapt to the screen than this acid-spiked romp through dystopian, Nixonian America? Nearly three decades later, Hunter S. Thompson's contempt for the American Dream doesn't have much punch; what stands out as truly bizarre is the quantity of drugs Thompson consumed on his trip. Director Terry Gilliam is a visual genius, and he and his brilliant art-design/special-effects team do a better job than you'd have thought possible of translating the paranoid energy of Thompson's prose and Ralph Steadman's trippy original drawings to the screen. But Gilliam seems less certain of the story's human content. Johnny Depp's Thompson comes across as a cipher, speaking in a gruff mumble that's hard to hear, and projecting an ethereal aura, as if this were the sequel to "Edward Scissorhands." Benicio del Toro, jeopardizing his hunk status with a significant weight gain, is far more daring as



Thomas Jay Ryan, James Urbaniak, and Parker Posey in "Henry Fool."

HIROSHI TANABE



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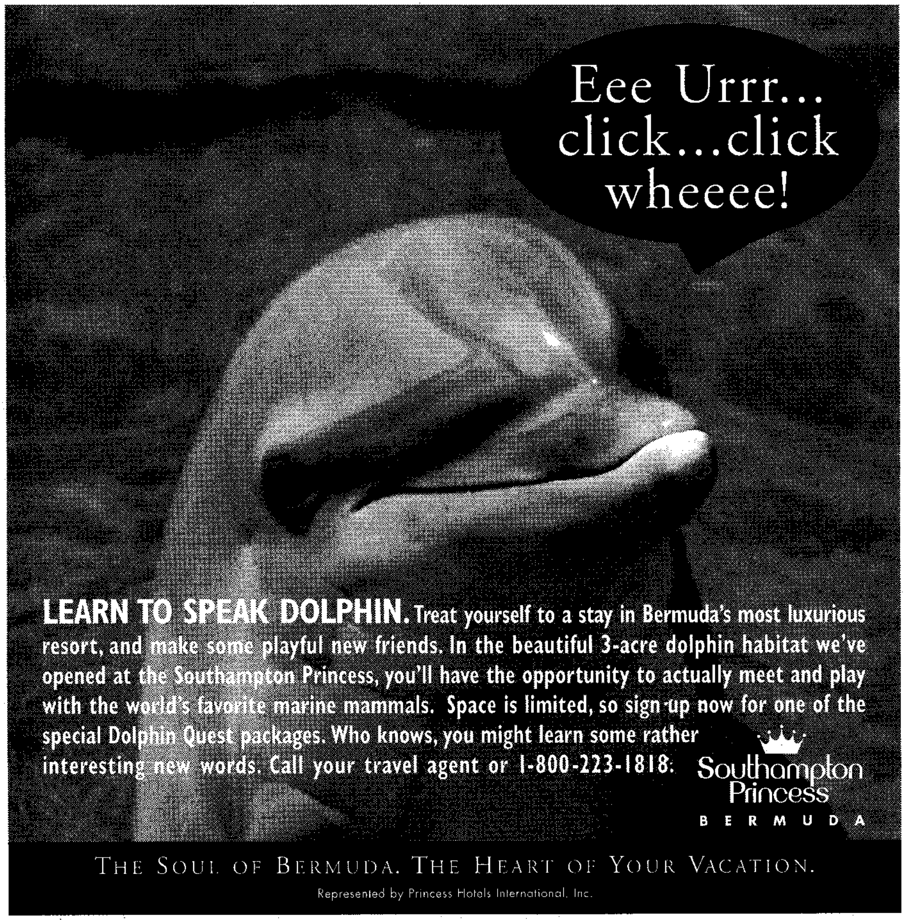

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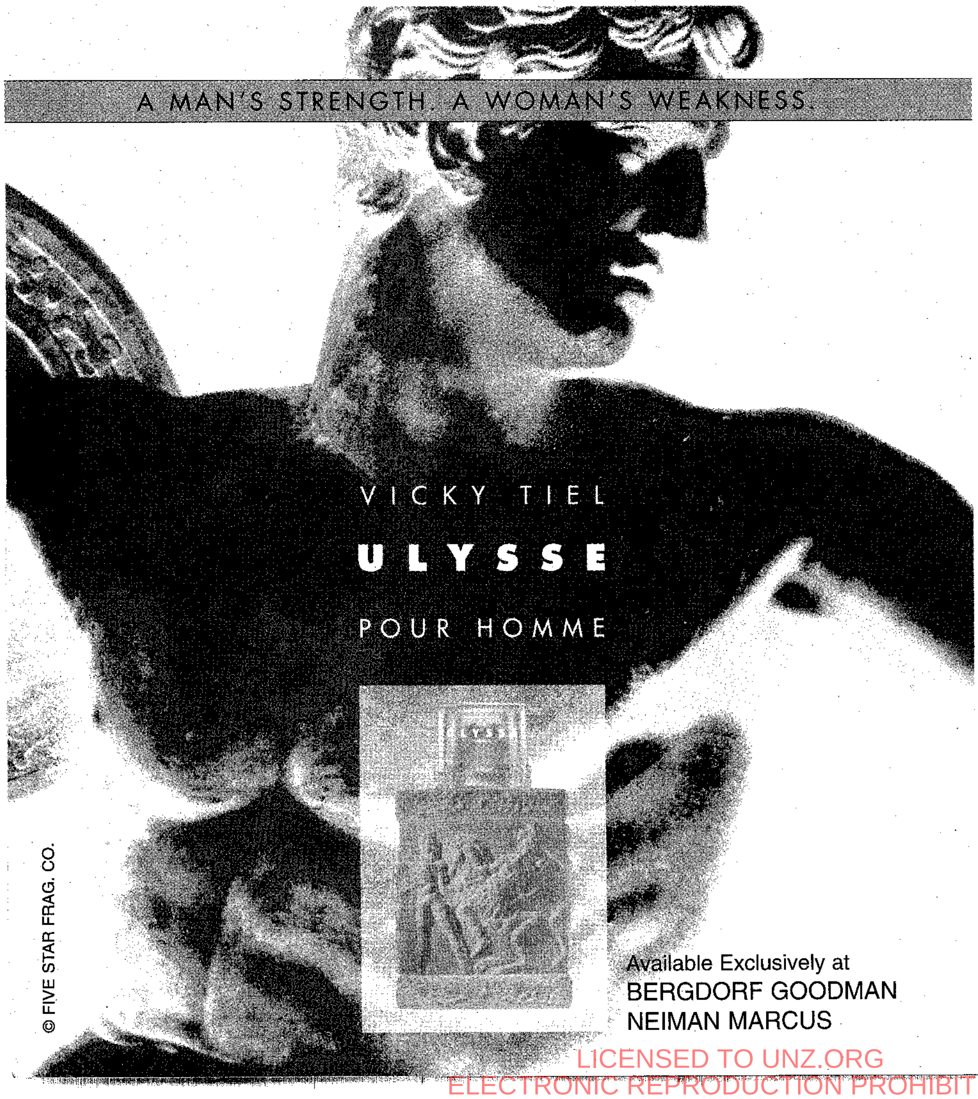

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Thompson's paunchy, drug-loving Samoan companion.—*Sarah Kerr* (Art Greenwich Twin, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 34th Street Showplace.)

Godzilla—The star of those tacky old Japanese horror films now gets a tacky new Hollywood horror film all to himself. Brought into being by irresponsible nuclear tests in French Polynesia, Godzilla heads for New York in search of a really first-rate fish restaurant. In his haste and fury the monster destroys a large proportion of the city's leading tourist sites; having totalled the White House in his previous picture, "Independence Day," director Roland Emmerich can hardly contain his childish desire to blow stuff up. The movie is of minimum interest; the story of the movie, however—or, rather, of the way in which it has been engulfed by its own publicity—is bound to fascinate connoisseurs of cultural meltdown. See it with a thousand friends, scream and shout, and then forget it.—*A.L.* (6/1/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Golden Coach (1953)—At his greatest, Jean Renoir expressed the beauty in our common humanity; that's what Anna Magnani at *her* greatest also expressed. This movie—his tribute to the commedia dell'arte—is also a tribute to her fabulous gifts, and she gives the film its gusto. We see her here not only as a sensual, earthy "woman of the people" but as an artist who exhausts her resources in creating the illusion of volcanic reality. Though Renoir has taken Prosper Mérimée's vehicle and shaped it for her, it will be forever debatable whether it contains her or she explodes it. But as this puzzle is parallel with the theme—a Pirandellian confusion of theatre and everyday life—it adds another layer to the ironic comedy. The film is set in a dusty frontier in Renaissance Peru: a band of Italian strolling players is attempting to bring art to South America. The movie, which has been compared to "Così Fan Tutte," is light and serious, cynical and beautiful, a blend of color, wit, and Vivaldi music.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; June 26-27.)

Go West, Young Man (1936)—"A thrill a day keeps the chill away," proclaims Mae West as a punchy diva on a personal-appearance tour. When she gets stuck in a boarding house between Washington, D.C., and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, we get a cheerful patchwork satire of sex-symbol celebrity. West gives even flat lines the benefit of her crack timing, and the director, Henry Hathaway, rarely dawdles. Although West fans have criticized the movie for portraying its heroine as a confused, hypocritical gal, West herself has fun playing a star at the end of her tasselled rope, given to repeating, with delicious weariness, her curtain speech from her latest hit—a hilarious film-within-a-film called "Drifting Lady." Warren William matches West in attitude if not barbsmanship as her zealous P.R. man; Randolph Scott proves an amiable beefcake foil as a rural mechanical wizard; and Alice Brady, Elizabeth Patterson, Margaret Perry, and Isabel Jewell hold their own as the ladies who run the boarding house. West wrote the script from Lawrence Riley's play "Personal Appearance."—*Michael Sragow* (A Different Light Bookstore; June 21.)

Hope Floats—Poor Sandra Bullock: she keeps turning up in dull projects that have little going for them beyond her spunk. Here, she's an ex-beauty queen who learns on a confessional talk show that her husband is cheating on her. She goes home to Texas to be healed by her cloyingly eccentric mother (Gena Rowlands), who likes to stuff dead animals and dress them up like people. Harry Connick, Jr., plays the love interest, and he's slightly more dynamic than a tree. Forest Whitaker directed with a slow, sugary touch—and, one suspects, an eye toward the home-video market.—*S.K.*

(Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Waverly.)

The Horse Whisperer—A girl called Grace (Scarlett Johansson) is involved in an accident with her horse, Pilgrim. Both are grievously injured: Grace loses a leg and Pilgrim loses his cool. They are then transported to Montana by Grace's determined mother (Kristin Scott Thomas), to seek out a man named Tom Booker (Robert Redford). "I help horses with people problems," Tom says, although he proves to be equally skilled at rejuvenating married women. The movie was directed by Redford himself, and the script is by Eric Roth and Richard LaGravenese: the latter made "The Bridges of Madison County" fit for human consumption, and he and Roth have almost pulled off the same trick with Nicholas Evans's nonsensical novel. The sticking point of the movie is its exorbitant length: two and three-quarter hours does seem like an awful long time to patch up a horse, and a movie that goes straight for your heart should not be allowed to fester. Some viewers may be bemused by the Scott Thomas character, an Englishwoman who cuts a swath through the world of New York magazine publishing. What kind of crazy fantasist dreamed *that* one up?—*A.L.* (Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Guild; through June 18.)

Kurt & Courtney—Nick Broomfield's chilling documentary, set in the netherworlds of Seattle and other places in the Pacific Northwest, in which we get to meet some drug-addled or merely bizarre folk who believe that Courtney Love, the raucous post-feminist icon, may have killed her husband, Kurt Cobain. The anti-Courtney revelations are interesting but inconclusive: Rozz Rezabeck, a former rocker and boyfriend of Courtney's, is the most amusing figure; Hank Harrison, Love's father, who reveals that he bought pit bulls to discipline his adolescent daughter, is by far the most frightening. The true circumstances of Cobain's death remain cloudy, but one comes away from the film unnerved by the distance travelled: we begin in a sleepy Washington town, with a little blond boy who likes to sing Beatles songs, and end up lost in a haze of heroin.—*Daphne Merkin* (Reviewed in "A Critic at Large," 6/8/98.) (Cinema Village.)

The Last Days of Disco—Whit Stillman is back on home ground—Manhattan—in the last of a trilogy of romantic comedies, the chronological missing chapter between "Metropolitan" and "Barcelona." Two Hampshire College graduates in the early eighties—Charlotte (Kate Beckinsale) and Alice (Chloë Sevigny)—share lowly jobs in book publishing and a consuming desire to hang out at what is referred to, totemically, as "the club." There they meet a number of Harvard graduates eager to take advantage of the scene after, as one character puts it, "the terrible wasteland of our college years." These include Des (Chris Eigeman), the club's lightly amoral manager, who claims to be gay when he wants to break up with a woman; Jimmy (Mackenzie Astin), who's desperate to impress his advertising clients; and Josh (Matt Keeslar), a junior prosecutor who's capable of deconstructing any subject, including the true meaning of disco fever. The recognizable Stillman touches are all here—the way the characters leap into ardent dialogue, the instant nostalgia for the moment as it happens—but the film doesn't leave much of an imprint.—*D.M.* (6/15/98) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

Mr. Jealousy—Noah Baumbach's funny follow-up to his 1995 hit, "Kicking and Screaming," is a story about an obsessive boyfriend (Eric Stoltz, in what may be his best performance) who deceitfully trails his girlfriend's ex into group therapy to ease his own insecurities. The movie is very much a frothy, neurotic ensemble piece, and Annabella Sciorra, Chris Eigeman, and Marianne Jean-Baptiste give such relaxed performances that the comedy flows easily; his characters don't know how funny they are.—*B.D.* (First & 62nd Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

Our Modern Maidens (1929)—The big-eyed, energetic young Joan Crawford in the jazz age. She and her friends give expensive parties where now and then someone jumps on a piano, sings a song, makes a speech, or does an imitation. With Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., as Crawford's young husband, Rod La Rocque as the older man of the world who complicates her life, Anita Page as a girl who complicates Fairbanks' life, and Edward Nugent and Josephine Dunn. A silent, this is one of the "shocking-youth" pictures that audiences flocked to. Directed by Jack Conway.—*P.K.* (Metropolitan Museum of Art; June 27.)

Passion in the Desert—Not your usual animal movie. Expanding on a passage in a Balzac novella, director Lavinia Currier and screenwriter Martin Edmunds weave the subtly disturbing story of a French soldier (Ben Daniels) who gets lost in the Egyptian desert during Napoleon's campaign of 1798 and, while hiding in a cave, realizes that he's not alone—a full-grown leopard crouches in the shadows. The creature's instincts suspended, she leads the delirious soldier to water, then kills a goat and shares it with him. Over an interval that's deliberately hazy, the man identifies more and more with the big cat, shedding all his clothes and mimicking her markings with mud and

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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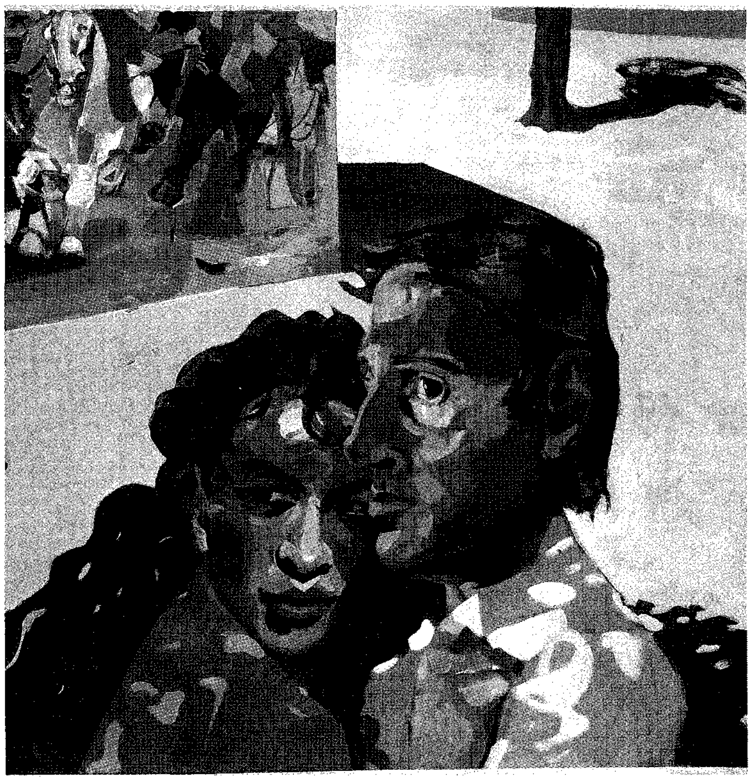
ashes. Essentially, folks, they fall in love. From there on, the film becomes a lush and definitely weird exploration of what can only be called interspecies eroticism, filmed without any sleight of camera: the uncanniness of a dangerous animal—and deep taboos—afoot never leaves the screen.—*Jeffrey Gustavson* (Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

The Truman Show—Peter Weir's new movie, his first since the perplexing "Fearless," is an even rarer creature: the sunlit black comedy. Jim Carrey plays Truman Burbank, a genial insurance agent who lives with his chronically nice wife, Meryl (Laura Linney), in the town of Seahaven. The place itself is drowning in pleasantry—no surprise, for it is in fact the largest set ever built. The sky is a dome, the sun and moon are lights in the roof, and every single citizen is an actor—everyone except Truman, who is the innocent star of the most successful documentary soap opera of all time. It's a startling conceit, dreamed up by screenwriter Andrew Niccol, but the picture's doomy warning—that television will overrun our lives and brains—is not exactly original. Still, it picks up pace in the second half, as the hero discovers his predicament and flees; up above, trying to control him, is the omnipotent Christof—the creator of the show, and a great role for the solid and scary Ed Harris. Carrey is on his mettle, but you wonder why thirty years of close observation have made Truman so funny; shouldn't he be a regular guy gone mad?—*A.L.* (6/15/98) (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)



Oyanka Cabezas and Robert Carlyle in "Carla's Song."

RICCARDO VECCHIO

ALSO PLAYING

BEYOND SILENCE: Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **BROADWAY DAMAGE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **CAN'T HARDLY WAIT:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **COUSIN BETTE:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **DEEP IMPACT** (reviewed in our issue of 5/18/98): 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly. . . . **DIRTY WORK:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Waverly. . . . **THE FARM: ANGOLA, USA:** Film Forum. . . . **HIGH ART:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **INSOMNIA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **THE LAND GIRLS:** Paris. . . . **THE OPPOSITE OF SEX:** Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Regency. . . . **A PERFECT MURDER:** Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **SIX DAYS, SEVEN NIGHTS:** Cinema I, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **SLIDING DOORS:** Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 2, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE SPANISH PRISONER** (4/13/98): First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **TITANIC** (12/15/97): Embassy 3 and First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES:** 59th Street East Cinema.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A program of films featuring the work of Betty Comden and Adolph Green. June 17: "The Barkleys of Broadway" (1949, Charles Walters) and "Good News" (1947, Walters). . . . June 18-21: "Singin' in the Rain" (1952, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen) and "The Band Wagon" (1953, Vincente Minnelli). . . . June 22: "The Gaucho" (1928, F. Richard Jones) and "Arsène Lupin" (1932, Jack Conway). . . . June 23: "Auntie Mame" (1958, Morton da Costa). . . . June 24-25: "On the Town" (1949, Kelly and Donen) and "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" (1949, Busby Berkeley). . . . ¶ From June 26: "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975, Peter Weir).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through July 7: A series of films made between 1966 and 1969. . . . ¶ June 19 at 6 and June 27 at 5: "Contempt" (1963, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). . . . ¶ June 19 at 8 and June 25 at 2:30: "Everyone Says I Love You" (1996, Woody Allen). . . . ¶ June 20 at 2 and June 25 at 6: "Lone Star" (1996, John Sayles). . . . ¶ June 20 at 5 and June 26 at 2:30: "Sopyonje" (1993, Im Kwon-Taek; in Korean). . . . ¶ June 21 at 2 and June 22 at 6: "Barton Fink" (1991, Joel Coen). . . . ¶ June 21 at 5 and June 22 at 2:30: "The Searchers" (1956, John Ford). . . . ¶ June 23 at 2:30 and June 28 at 5: "Unforgiven" (1992, Clint Eastwood). . . . ¶ June 23 at 6: "Bunny Lake Is Missing" (1965, Otto Preminger). . . . ¶ June 26 at 6:30 and June 29 at 2:30: "Nixon" (1995, Oliver Stone). . . . ¶ June 27 at 2 and June 29 at 6: "The Age of Innocence" (1993, Martin Scorsese). . . . ¶ June 28 at 1 and June 30 at 6: "Around the World in Eighty Days" (1956, Michael Anderson). . . . ¶ June 30 at 2:30: "Lonesome Cowboys" (1967, Andy Warhol).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through June 25: The 1998 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. . . . ¶ A program of French films about art and artists; most in French, with English subtitles. June 26 at 2, 6:15, and 10 and June 27 at 6:10: "The Golden Coach" (†). . . . June 26 at 4 and 8:15 and June 27 at 4 and 8:10: "French Cancan" (1955, Jean Renoir). . . . June 28 at 4 and 7:30 and June 29 at 2: "Children of Paradise" (1945, Marcel Carné). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. June 27-28 at 2: "On the Town" (1949, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of independent films made in New York City. June 20 at 2: "Bad Lieutenant" (1992, Abel Ferrara). . . . June 20 at 4: "Laws of Gravity" (1992, Nick Gomez). . . . June 21 at 2: "A Bronx Tale" (1993, Robert De Niro). . . . June 21 at 4:30: "Mac" (1993, John Turturro). . . . June 27 at 2: "All the Vermeers in New York" (1992, Jon Jost). . . . June 27 at 4: "I Shot Andy Warhol" (1996, Mary Harron). . . . June 28 at 2: "Combination Platter" (1993, Tony Chan). . . . June 28 at 4:30: "The Wedding Banquet" (1993, Ang Lee).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with coming attractions. The feature on June 22 will be "An Affair to Remember" (1957, Leo McCarey); on June 29, "Imitation of Life" (1959, Douglas Sirk). (Rain dates are the following nights.)

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (570-3710)—June 20 at 4: "The Kiss" (1929, Jacques Feyder; silent). . . . June 27 at 4: "Our Modern Maidens" (†).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—June 23 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Nobody Loves Me" (1994, Marion Vernoux; in French). . . . June 30 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "See How They Fall" (1994, Jacques Audiard; in French).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On June 21 at 7, the feature will be "Go West, Young Man" (†); on June 28 at 7: "Myra Breckenridge" (1970, Michael Sarne).

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3587)—A program of films featuring the motorcycle. June 26 at 2:30: "Sherlock, Jr." (1924, Buster Keaton; silent). . . . June 27 at 2:30: "Duck Soup" (1933, Leo McCarey). . . . June 27 at 7:30: "Orpheus" (1949, Jean Cocteau; in French).

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000, ext. 230)—A program of Mexican films on which Gabriel Figueroa served as cinematographer. All films in Spanish, with English subtitles. June 20 at 5: "Maria Candelaria" (1943, Emilio Fernandez). . . . June 27 at 5: "The Pearl" (1948, Fernandez).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A program of films from the Cinémathèque Française. June 18 at 8 and June 20 at 5: "India" (1958, Roberto Rossellini). . . . June 19-20 at 8 and June 21 at 6: "Tih-Minh" (1918, Louis Feuilland; silent). . . . June 21 at 4 and 9: "The Family Honor" (1920, King Vidor; silent). . . . June 24 at 8: "The Cold Deck" (1917, William S. Hart; silent). . . . June 26 at 8 and 9:30: "Chicago" (1927, Frank Urson; silent). . . . June 27 at 6: "La Valigia dei Sogni" (1953, Luigi Comencini). . . . June 27 at 8:30: "Michel Strogoff" (1926, V. Tourjanki; silent). . . . June 28 at 3 and 7: "La Grace A Trois Faces" (1927, Jean Epstein; silent). . . . ¶ June 19 at 7 and 9:30, June 20-21 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30, June 22-26 at 7 and 9:30, and June 27-28 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Z" (1969, Costa-Gavras).

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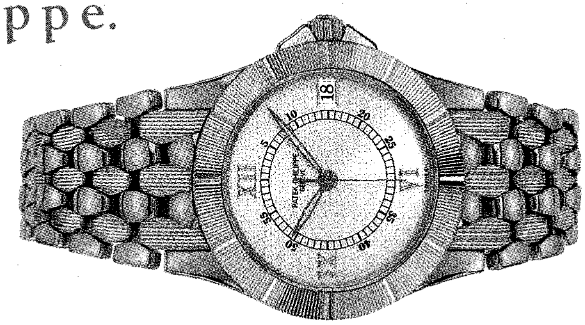

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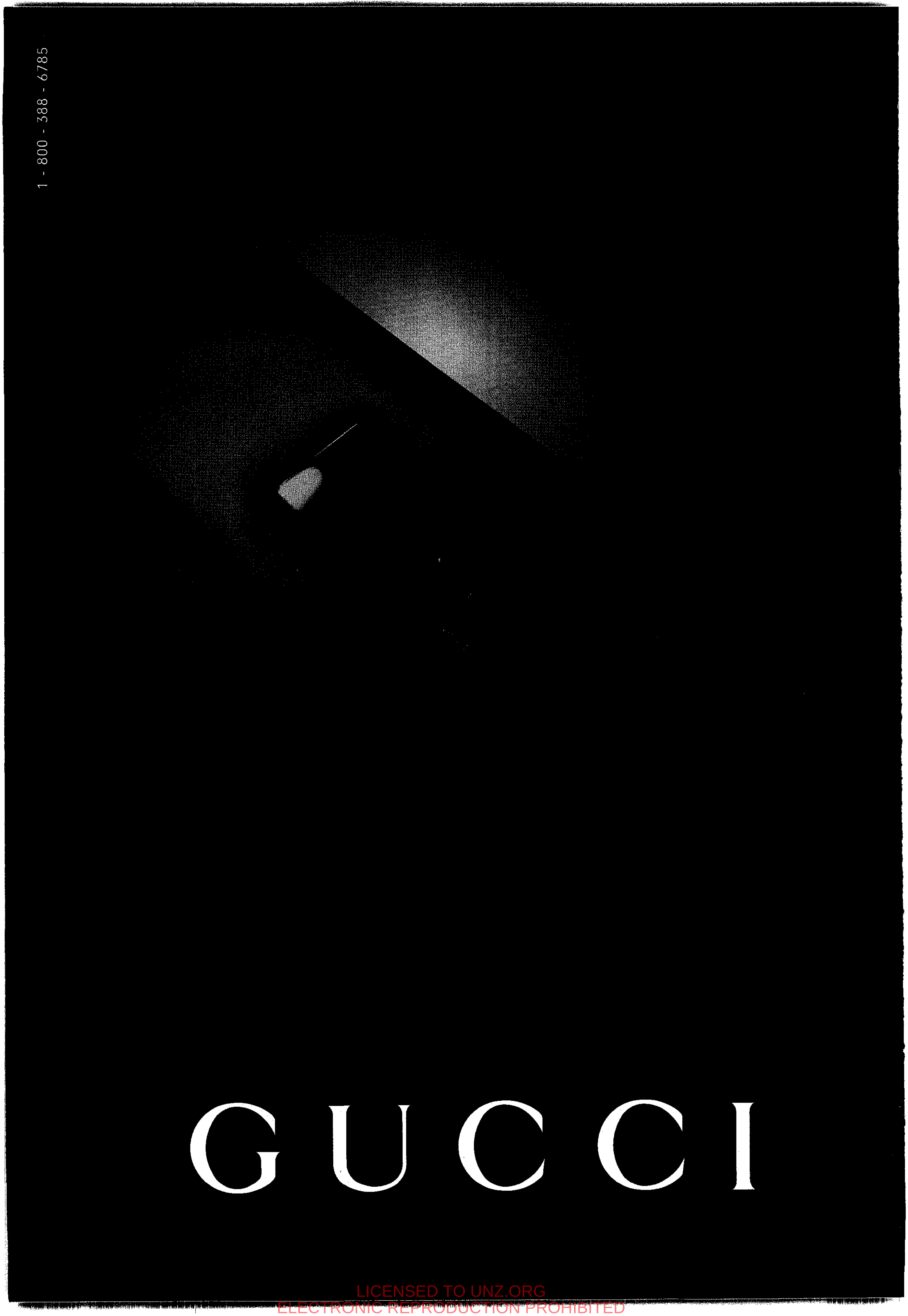

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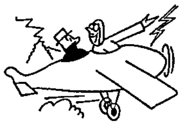


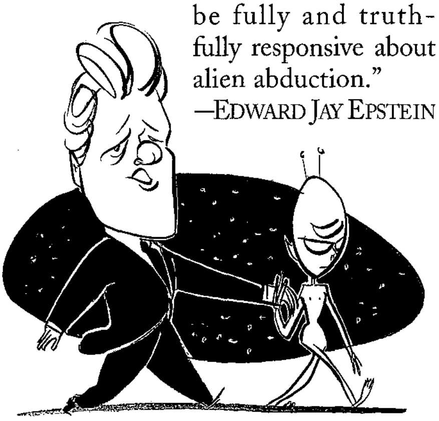
On Saturday, June 6th, the *Times* reported that for a few moments the President's plane had been missing. "Radar images of Air Force One flickered mysteriously twice . . . and, according to air traffic controllers, vanished entirely from their radar screens as the plane flew over New Jersey," the story read. "It was the second time this year that the Presidential jet has trailed off the same radar system."

"Mysteriously" is the key word in the *Times* story. As any viewer of "The X-Files" knows, when a plane mysteriously vanishes from radar screens—twice!—this is usually the work of alien abductors. The aliens then commonly substitute replicants for the passengers while conducting secret experiments on the real, purloined humans. (Sometimes they also give the abducted humans dazzling consciousness-raising tours of parallel universes, but that is not relevant here.)

The White House certainly knows that half of the American public believes in the existence of U.F.O.s. An alien-abduction theory like the one outlined above, if advanced by David Kendall and the legal team defending the President in Kenneth Starr's investigation, would provide a convincing "Two Clinton" explanation that would get everyone, including Starr, off the hook. Here's the scenario: It was a substituted Clinton clone, not our Commander-in-Chief, who was visited numerous times by Monica Lewinsky in the Oval Office. (These visits, of course, were part of a second layer of extraterrestrial experiments conducted on unwary earthlings.) In this happy rendering, all the humans are telling the truth.

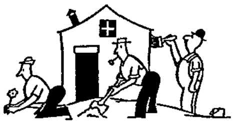
When this intriguing alien-abduction theory was run by Sidney Blumenthal (the Presidential adviser who has been subpoenaed by Starr, and who is no longer protected by executive privilege), he promised to bring it up at the next staff meeting. After discussing the "Two Clinton" theory with his White House colleagues, Blumenthal E-mailed, "When I appeared most recently before the grand jury, Ken Starr's prosecutors asked me many fantastical questions about these strategy meetings. When I return to the grand jury, if asked further questions about White House strategy sessions, I will be fully and truthfully responsive about alien abduction."

—EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN



LAND OF MAKE-BELIEVE

Does "The Truman Show" give Seaside, Florida, a bum rap?



No one has ever figured out where the boundary is between architecture and stage sets, but "The Truman Show" has done more than anything since Disneyland to make it blurrier. Most films are photographed on phony sets that are intended to look real. "The Truman Show" was shot in a real location—Seaside, Florida—that we are supposed to believe is phony. It is not meant to be entirely fake, however; the movie's premise is that the village of Seahaven does exist, but only as a gigantic stage set on which Truman Burbank lives his make-believe life, watched on television by real people out in the real world (who are, in turn, watched by movie audiences in the same multiplex that is showing "Godzilla"). The film is like an exquisite Chinese box: make-believe inside reality inside more make-believe inside more reality.

Operating on the assumption that Seahaven is too cute to be believed, the film is not particularly kind to Seaside, which was constructed in the nineteen-eighties along the Florida Panhandle as a model neotraditional community. The movie dolls the place up to a level of sweetness far beyond its normal state, then presents it as Truman's saccharine-coated jail. Such extreme niceness, the movie suggests, can only be masking evil.

No wonder they are not quite sure what to make of the movie down in Seaside, where the filming of "The Truman Show" was the biggest thing to happen since Prince Charles gave the place his blessing, back in 1989. Residents are in a tizzy. Will millions of moviegoers see their home as paradise on earth or as the poster town for disingenuous cuteness?

Robert Davis, the developer who conceived of Seaside and now functions as a sort of town philosopher, says that he had been uncertain about whether to let "The Truman Show" be filmed in Seaside. "We seriously considered just saying no," Davis said last week. "We knew this was a big risk, that all the prejudices about Seaside could be confirmed."

Seaside came into being when Davis, a sixties radical who had inherited eighty acres of land along the Gulf of Mexico, decided to use it as the locale for an ideal community, and hired the architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk

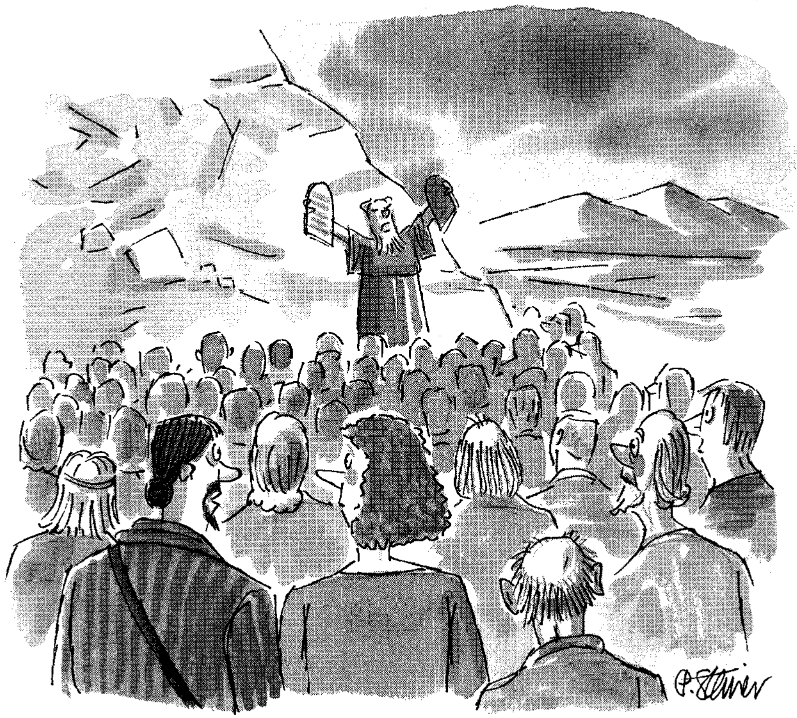
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

to design a master plan. They created what became an icon of the neotraditionalist movement in planning and architecture, a place in which wooden houses are set along narrow streets, public buildings cluster around small squares, and the best way to get around is on foot.

Davis says that he envisioned the movie as "a parable of an escape from the Garden of Eden," although as the filming got under way he found that Seaside was looking less like his Eden and more like Hollywood's. "I was frankly puzzled by the production designer's aesthetic," he says. "They ripped out the sycamore trees and replaced them with plastic topiary."

The problem is that Seaside appealed to Peter Weir, the director, precisely because it looked fake, and by tarting it up he thought that he was enhancing the original vision. Defending the town, Davis has lately been comparing Seaside with such venerable resort environments as Bath and Brighton, which are really just escapist fantasy stage sets from other centuries. But that argument ignores why Seaside is a serious place, and why it is different, in the end, from Seahaven. The brilliance of Seaside is that it knows just how far to push cuteness, and then it stops. There is something about it that is hard to grasp—it is too real to be Disneyland, too entrancing to be any other small community. Its founders are proud of the fact that it lacks gates, and its tiny squares and plazas stand as symbols of public space at a time when that is becoming a scarce commodity. The place lacks hard edges, but it is not simple-minded or controlling, and it is not an effort by a huge corporation to market sentimentality, as Celebration, the Disney-built town near Orlando, is. Seaside was brought into being out of a kind of innocence; unfortunately, "The Truman Show" has made it a symbol of cynicism.

—PAUL GOLDBERGER



"I understand the Ten Commandments. But what is this Second Amendment he keeps going on about?"

THE CREATIVE LIFE

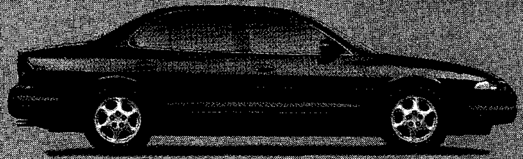
Al Hirschfeld blows out his candles.

I REALIZE that any minute now my dear friend Al Hirschfeld will be ninety-five. I pick up the phone for a celebratory chat. Al is in his studio, on East Ninety-fifth Street, in his antique barber chair, drawing. Always drawing. "I feel wonderful," he says. "Absolutely wonderful." I suggest that work plays a part in his miraculous vitality. I hear a full-throated snort. "It isn't work, kid. It's luxury. Pure luxury. I don't call it work. I haven't a clue how one would retire." Al uses the word "retire" the way some people pronounce "Richard Nixon." "What's a man to do? Sit around some sun-soaked beach all day? Watching the waves? Or playing golf? Golf!"—same tone as "retire." "Human beings fascinate me. People," he says. "I used to love just sitting in the window of the Howard Johnson's at Forty-sixth and Broadway, drawing the constant parade of people passing by." Does he still make notes in his pocket during a show, in the dark? "Just for reminders," he says. "I'll draw a bow tie, or a cane, or jot down one word or make a sketch that brings back an entire scene."

I remind Al that he once said, "It would never occur to me to do a drawing of the Grand Canyon. It is just a decayed molar under a very dramatic light." Now Al says, "Still feel the same way. Nature is *there*. What are you going to do? It's movement that interests me. Movement in my drawing gives me total freedom. I can go where I want. I can take the line anywhere. I'm not governed by gravity." I venture that his line is stronger today than when he was a stripling of seventy-five. "It's the freedom," he says. "The exhilarating freedom." We talk a bit about kindness. In a mean world, there is never any meanness in a Hirschfeld drawing. "Nothing funny about a big nose, or a grotesque face, or making people look like an image in some Coney Island fun-house mirror," he says. "I once did a drawing of Jimmy Durante, and I left the nose out."

I remind him of the joyous weekly lunches we used to have at the old Lobster restaurant, on Forty-fifth Street, with S. J. Perelman, Joseph Mitchell, Brooks Atkinson, Harvey Orkin, Albert Hackett. "I'd like to start those all over again," he says. "Why don't we think about it?" He goes on, "Something has happened to humor. Out of fashion—I don't understand it. Jokes aren't humor. Something to do with economics and people incapable of satirizing the times in which they live." He's thinking back now. "I miss the great Miguel Covarrubias. Tremendous influence on me. I'd like to think I had some effect on him.

"But the fuss over this birthday! Hard to believe. Photographers all over the house, in every corner but the sandbox. We have a rabbi lives across the street, *Turns the asphalt at your feet into putty in your hands.*



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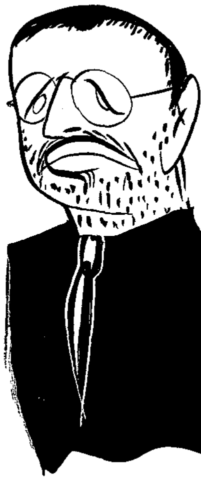
and I step outside the other day and there are *six* photographers on the rabbi's roof, snapping pictures of me. On the big day, Louise and I will go to her family in Larchmont for a barbecue. So long, kid. Much love to all at your place." Click. —PHILIP HAMBURGER

SECOND ACTS

Ringo Starr finally gets to see what the audience looks like.

RINGO STARR'S new album, "Vertical Man," features a cover of "Love Me Do," the Beatles' first single, and the new version suggests that if Richard Starkey's had been the dominant personality in the Fab Four things would have been a whole lot more *drummy*. "We had to change it—I didn't want to do an exact replica," Ringo said on the phone from London the other day, explaining why this recording has the thumping pace and metre of a pub sing-along. "You have to mold it for yourself."

Ringo, of course, was the Beatle who hardly ever got to mold things for himself. But his inner front man was there, waiting to get out. "I was always sort of nailed to the floor at the back, being the drummer," he said. Now he tours with his own backing band, the All-Stars, and, he said, "to get up there and see right in the people's faces, and getting them to sing 'Yellow Submarine' or 'Little Help from My Friends,' is great." For Ringo, re-recording "Love Me Do" amounted to a kind of therapeutic recuperation: he's made something his own again that wasn't even his in the first place. "Before I joined the Beatles, they auditioned for George Martin," he explained. "Then I joined the band, and we went down for the first recording session"—when "Love Me Do" was taped. "George had a studio drummer there, and he didn't know me, so he wanted to go with the security of the session drummer. Which is *O.K.* And George has apologized to me on a daily basis ever since."



Ringo Starr

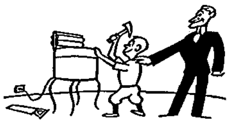
As a Beatle, Ringo never seemed like the type who needed his pain felt, but the evidence of the years makes one suspect that he has abandonment issues. ("When we recorded 'Love Me Do' on 'Vertical Man,' *I* played drums then," he said, assertively.) When he was asked about the Beatles' 1964 world tour—stricken with tonsillitis, Ringo was replaced, for gigs in Holland and Hong Kong, by a substitute drummer—he reflected upon whether any of his three compeers would likewise have been considered dispensable. "I think it would have been harder to leave John and Paul behind, because they were the lead singers," Ringo said carefully. "And then George, of course, was the lead guitarist." For years, Ringo didn't like to perform Beatles tunes, but last week he joined Paul and George in playing "Let It Be" at a memorial service for Linda McCartney. "I spoke to her the day she left for America," he said, "and the next phone call was from Paul telling me we had lost her."

Ringo's contemporary musical tastes are not hard to discern. Alanis Morrisette: *yes* (she sings on his album). The Spice Girls: *no*. ("Do I think they will survive without Geri? Yes. And I think Geri can make a life for herself.") The title of his new record is a salutation to ordinary blokes. "I happened to be glancing through a book of quotations, and this one just popped out at me: 'Let's hear it for the vertical man, because so much praise is given to the horizontal one,'" he said, paraphrasing Auden. "I love that sentiment. I am playing with a lot of musicians who went through heading for horizontal, and they survived and got themselves together." Paul McCartney pitches in on a couple of numbers, as does Scott Weiland, the singer from the Stone Temple Pilots, who was just arrested for buying heroin in the East Village.

"He was vertical when he was on my record, but he is not vertical now," said Ringo, who did his own stint of drug-and-drink rehab ten years ago. "In the music business, you are allowed to drink, and you are up all night, and you are allowed to take drugs—it's part of it. But, you know, we must always remember that the highest suicide rate is among dentists." —REBECCA MEAD

DEPT. OF REMEMBERING

The Proustian effect of a handed-down hammer.



A FEW weeks after my father died unexpectedly, of a heart attack, at the age of sixty-nine, I received in the mail a box from an unfamiliar address in Oregon. Inside was a note and a heavy, old-fashioned hammer. They had been sent by a boyhood friend of my father's, and he explained that he had borrowed the hammer more than fifty years earlier and had always meant to return it. My father was a man of tools. All kinds of tools: automotive, woodworking, carpentry, plumbing. Work was his hobby, and fixing things his life's calling. He spent one Father's Day replacing the brake pads on my car, a difficult and grimy job. He couldn't have been happier.

He enlisted my help at an early age, but it was clear from the beginning that this part of the father-son compact would never be consummated. He worked. I watched. It just didn't take with me. Words were my tools, and it's tough to replace a fuel pump or roof a house with sweet talk. When I married and moved away, he couldn't wait to visit, so he could go through our home, fixing things that I had no idea were broken.

When he died, my brothers and I divided up the tools. I took only the few I could recognize—the elementary saws, some screwdrivers, a small socket set, and a power drill—and added that long-lost hammer to the collection. Whenever I use these tools, I am instantly in touch with my father. Calling him by his nickname, I'll say aloud, "Red, don't laugh, but I'm about to try to fix a leaky pipe." There are limits, of course. If I went out to my car with my meagre toolbox, I could ask all the right questions, but I still wouldn't be able to replace the brake pads. —TOM BROKAW

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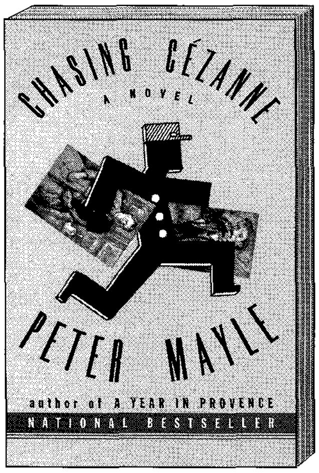
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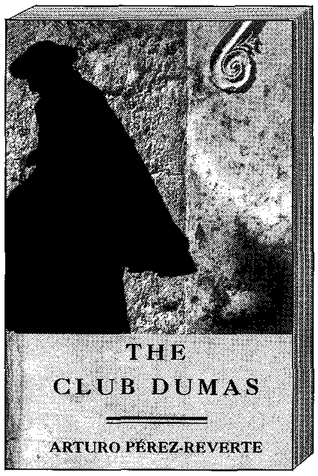
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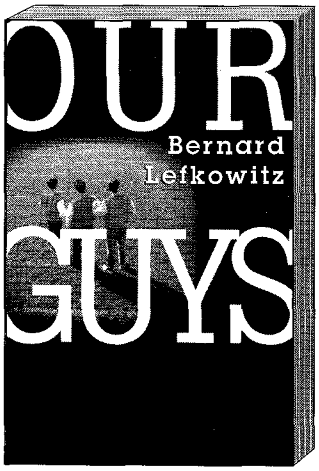
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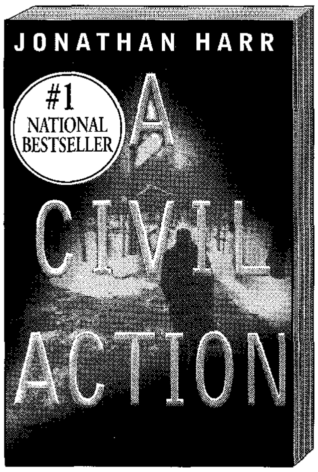
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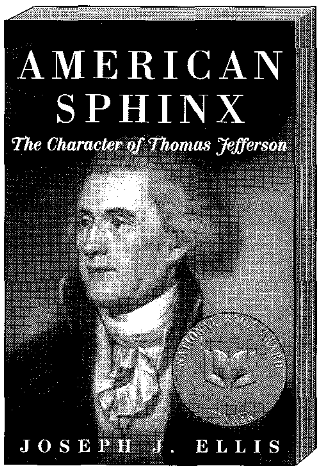
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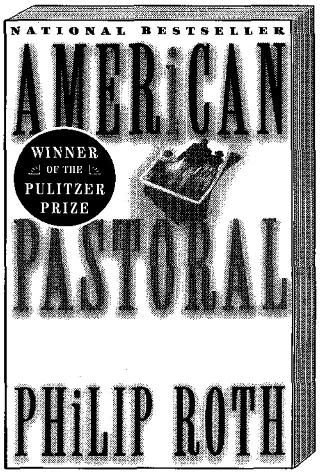
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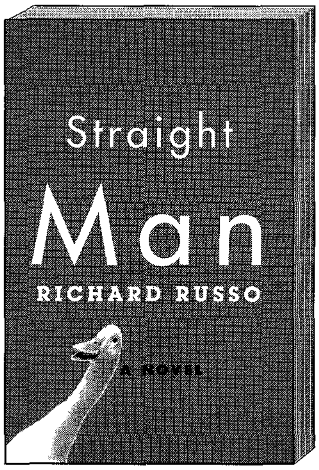
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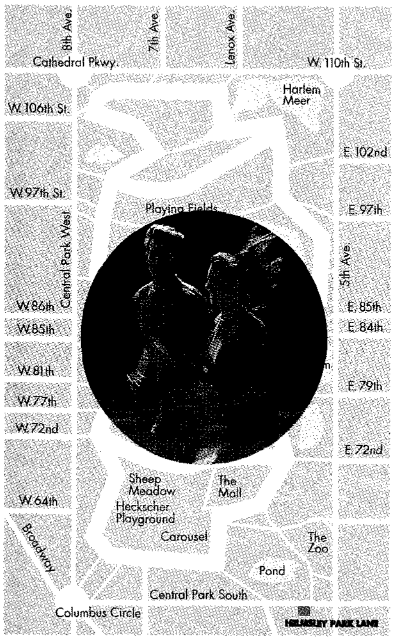

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PERSONAL HISTORY

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The author named the Beat Generation and wrote its most famous novel. Forty-seven years later, his journals are available for the first time.

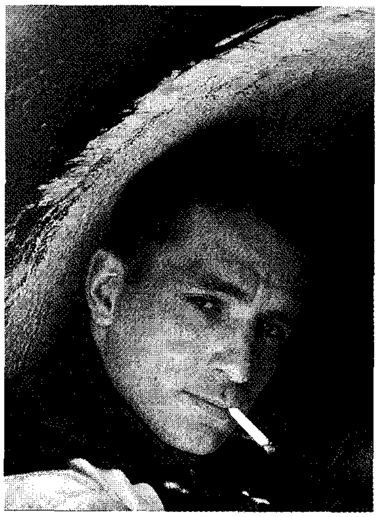
BY JACK KEROUAC

Jack Kerouac began keeping journals as a fourteen-year-old boy, in 1936, and continued to do so—somewhat obsessively—until his death, at age forty-seven. The following entries span the years from 1948, when the twenty-five-year-old Kerouac had recently returned to New York from a cross-country trip, to 1950, when his first book, "The Town and the City," was published.

Although "The Town and the City"—a lengthy novel about growing up in New England—brought Kerouac moderate notice, it was not until the publication of "On the Road," in 1957, after six years of rejection by publishers, that he achieved celebrity. But he was resentful of the late recognition, and of critics who dismissed his work as part of the Beat "fad." In fact, Kerouac, who was an American romantic at heart—he thought of himself as a "lumberjack bard"—had grown increasingly skeptical of his fellow Beat authors Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs, and in his journals he frequently criticized the two writers for their cynicism and lack of patriotism.

Kerouac wrote twelve more novels, but he never again received the level of acclaim he achieved with "On the Road." He died of alcohol-related causes, in 1969, in a hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida. Kerouac's journals—which number more than two hundred volumes—were kept in a vault in Lowell, Massachusetts, and, under instructions from his widow, were not to be released until her death. She died in 1990.

—DOUGLAS BRINKLEY



Did Jack Kerouac write "On the Road" in three weeks? Or were his journals a first draft?

LEFT: WILBUR T. PIPPIN; RIGHT: WARREN NEIDICH

JANUARY 1, 1948. QUEENS, NEW YORK. Today, read my novel ["The Town and the City"] in its entirety. I see that it's almost finished. What is my opinion? It is the sum of myself, as far as the written word can go, and my opinion of it is like my opinion of myself!—gleeful and affectionate one day, black with disgust the next.

Wrote 2500 words, until interrupted by a visit from Allen Ginsberg, who came at four o'clock in the morning to tell me that he is going mad, but once and if cured he will communicate with other human beings as no one ever has—completely, sweetly, naturally. He described his terror and seemed on the verge of throwing a fit in my house. When he calmed down I read him parts of my novel and he leeringly announced that it was "greater than Melville, in a sense—the great American novel." I did not believe a word he said.

Someday I will take off my own

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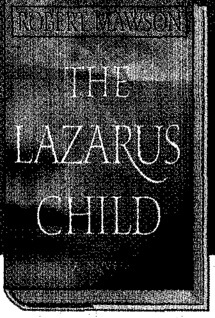

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mask and tell all about Allen Ginsberg and what he is in the "real" flesh. It seems to me that he is just like any other human being and that this drives him to wit's ends. How can I help a man who wants to be a monster one minute and a god the next?

• April 17, 1948. Went to N.Y., argued with a girl all night. Also, Ginsberg went mad and begged me to hit him—which spells the end as far as I'm concerned, since it's hard enough to keep sane without visiting the asylum every week. He wanted to know "what else" I had to do in the world that didn't include him. I told him I *did* have an unconscious desire to hit him but he would be glad later on that I did not.

I have been through with all that foolishness since the days I fought with Edie [Edith Parker, Kerouac's first wife] and climbed trees with Lucien [Carr], but these Ginsbergs assume that no one else has seen their visions of cataclysmic emotion, and try to foist them on others. I have been a liar and a shifty weakling by pretending that I was the friend of these people—Ginsberg, Joan [Burroughs], Carr, Burroughs, [David] Kammerer even—when all the time I must have known that we disliked each other and were just grimacing incessantly in a comedy of malice. A man must recognize his limits or never be true.

• June 2, 1948. After supper Allen Ginsberg dropped in, bringing the remainder of the manuscript which, he said, ended so "big and profound." He thinks I'm going to be a rich man now, but worries about what I'll do with money; that is, he can't picture me with money (nor can I). He thinks I'm a true Myshkin, bless his soul. . . . The madness has left Allen now and I like him as much as ever.

• June 3, 1948. I worked out an intricate mathematical thing which determines how assiduously I'm getting my novel typed and revised day after day. It's too complicated to explain, but suffice it to say that yesterday I was batting .246, and after today's work my "batting average" rose to .306. The point is, I've got to hit like a champion, I've got to catch up and stay with Ted Williams (currently hitting .392 in baseball). If I can catch him, June will be the final month of work on "Town & City."

• June 17, 1948. Madly, painfully lonesome for a woman these evenings . . . and on I work. I see them walking outside and I go crazy. Why is it that a man trying to do big work, alone and poor, cannot find one woman who will give him her love and time? Someone like me, healthy, sexual, riven with desire for any pretty girl I see, yet unable to make love now, in youth, as they parade indifferently by my window—well, goddamit, it isn't right! This experience is going to make me bitter, by God!

Went to bed with a .350 average.

• July 3, 1948. Big party in Harlem, at Allen's and Russell Durgin's. I spent another three days without eating or sleeping to speak of, just drinking and squinting and sweating. There was a vivacious girl straight out of the twenties, red-haired, distraught, sexually frigid (I learned). I walked 3 ½ miles in a Second Avenue heat wave to her "streamlined Italian apartment," where I lay on the floor looking up out of a dream. Seems like I had sensed it all before. There was misery, and the beautiful ugliness of people, and there was [Herbert] Huncke telling me that he had seen Edie in Detroit and told her that I still loved her. Do I love Edie still? The wife of my youth? Tonight I think so. In my phantasy of glee there is no sea-light and no beatness, just the wind blowing through the kitchen window on an October morning.

• August 17, 1948. Babe Ruth died yesterday, and I ask myself, "Where is Babe Ruth's father?" Who spawned this Bunyan? What man, where, what thoughts did he have? Nobody knows. This is an American mystery.

• August 23, 1948. Told my mother she ought to go live down South with the family instead of spending all her time slaving in shoe factories. In Russia they slave for the State, here they slave for Expenses. People rush off to meaningless jobs day after day, you see them coughing in the subways at dawn. They squander their souls on things

TRAIL BLAZER

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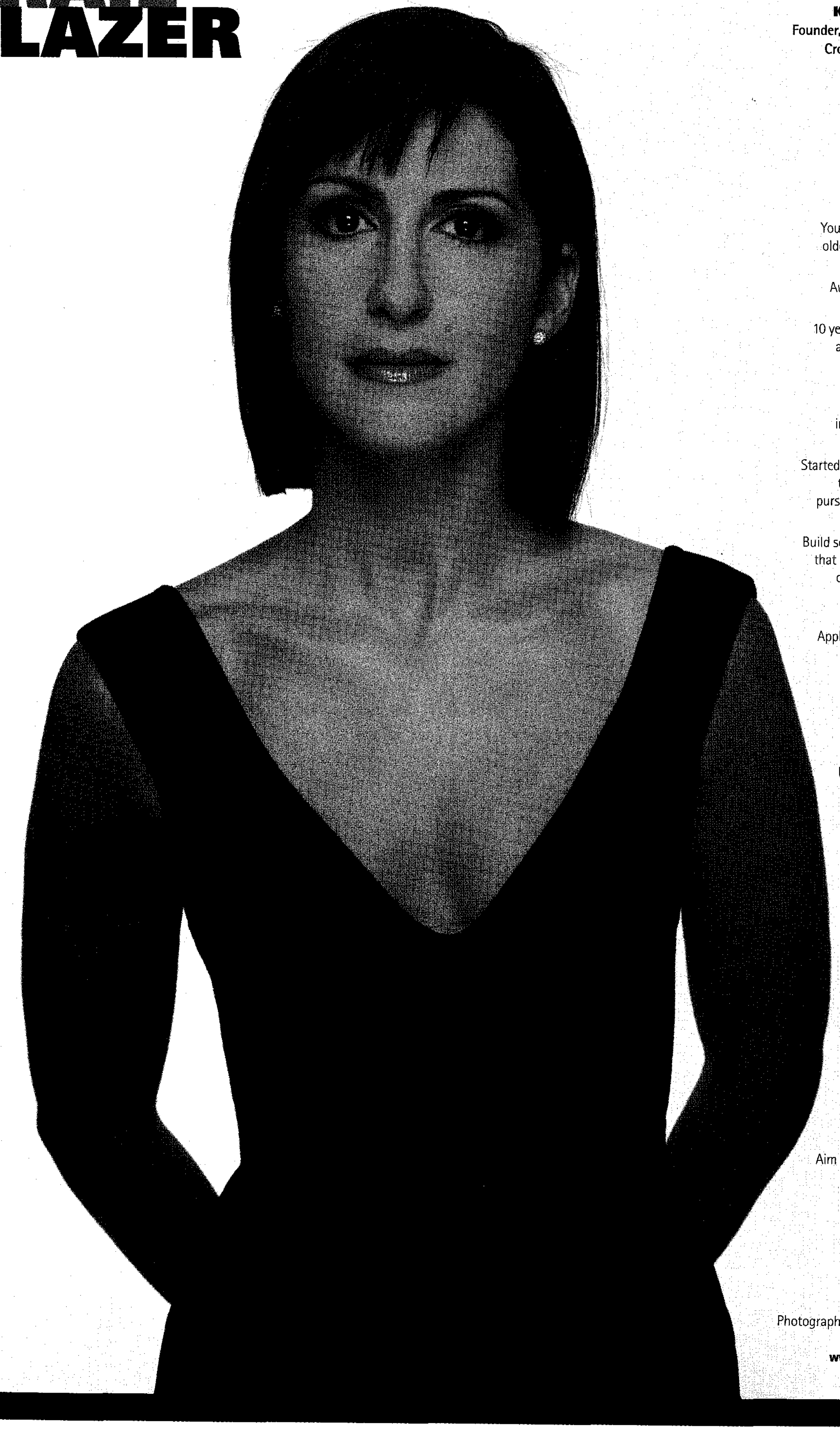

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like "rent," "decent clothes," "gas and electricity," "insurance," behaving like peasants who have just come out of the fields and are so dreadful tickled because they can buy baubles and doodads in stores.

My life is going to be a farm where I'll grow my food. I won't do nothing but sit under a tree while my crops are growing, drink homemade wine, write novels to edify my soul, play with my kids, and thumb my nose at the coughing wretches. The next thing you know, they'll all be marching off to some annihilating war which their leaders will start to keep up appearances. Shit on the Russians, shit on the Americans, shit on them all.

I have another novel in mind—"On the Road"—which I keep thinking about: two guys hitchhiking to California in search of something they don't really find, and losing themselves on the road, coming all the way back hopeful of something else.

• SEPTEMBER 9, 1948. Got form-rejection card from Macmillan's. I'm getting more confident and angrier each time something like this happens, because I know "The Town and the City" is a great book in its own awkward way. And I'm going to sell it. I'm ready for any battle there is. Even if I have to go off and starve on the road I won't give up the notion that I should make a living from this book: I'm convinced that people themselves will like it whenever the wall of publishers and critics and editors is torn down. It is they who are my enemies, not "obscurity" or "poverty."

• JANUARY 3, 1949. SAN FRANCISCO. *The Saga of the Mist (New York to New Orleans).* N.Y. across the tunnel to New Jersey—the "Jersey night" of Allen Ginsberg. We in the car jubilant, beating on the dashboard of the '49 Hudson coupe . . . headed West. Haunted by something I have yet to remember. Neal [Cassady] and I and Louanne [Henderson] talking of the value of life as we speed along: "Whither goest thou America in thy shiny car at night?" Seldom had I been so glad. It was sweet to sit near Louanne. In the back seat Al and Rhoda made love. And Neal drove

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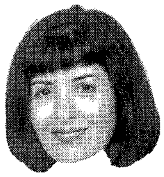

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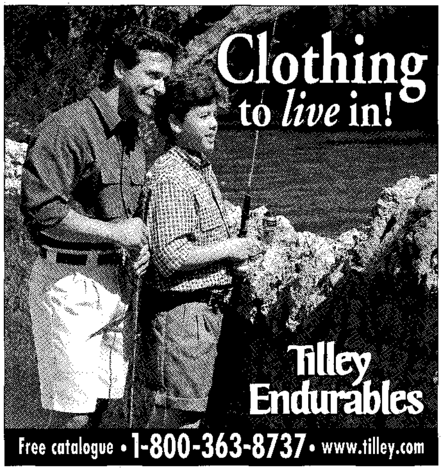

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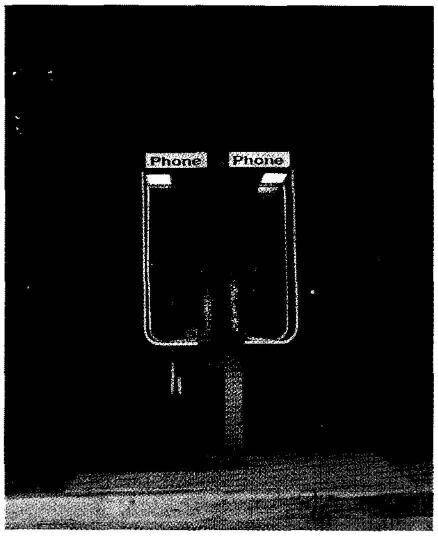
with the bebop music playing on the radio, huzzaing.

Neal got lost outside of Baltimore and wound up on a ridiculously narrow little tar road in the woods (he was trying to find a shortcut). "Doesn't look like Route One," he said ruefully. It seemed a very funny remark. Near Emporia, Va., we picked up a mad hitchhiker who said he was Jewish (Herbert Diamond) and made his living knocking at the doors of Jewish homes all over the country, demanding money. "I am a Jew!—give me money." "What kicks!" cried Neal.

I drove in South Carolina, which was flat and dark in the night (with star-shiny roads, and Southern dullness somewhere around). Outside Mobile, Ala., we began to hear rumors of New Orleans and "chicken, jazz 'n' gumbo," bebop shows on the radio, and wild back-alley jazz; so we yelled happily in the car.



WARREN NEIDICH

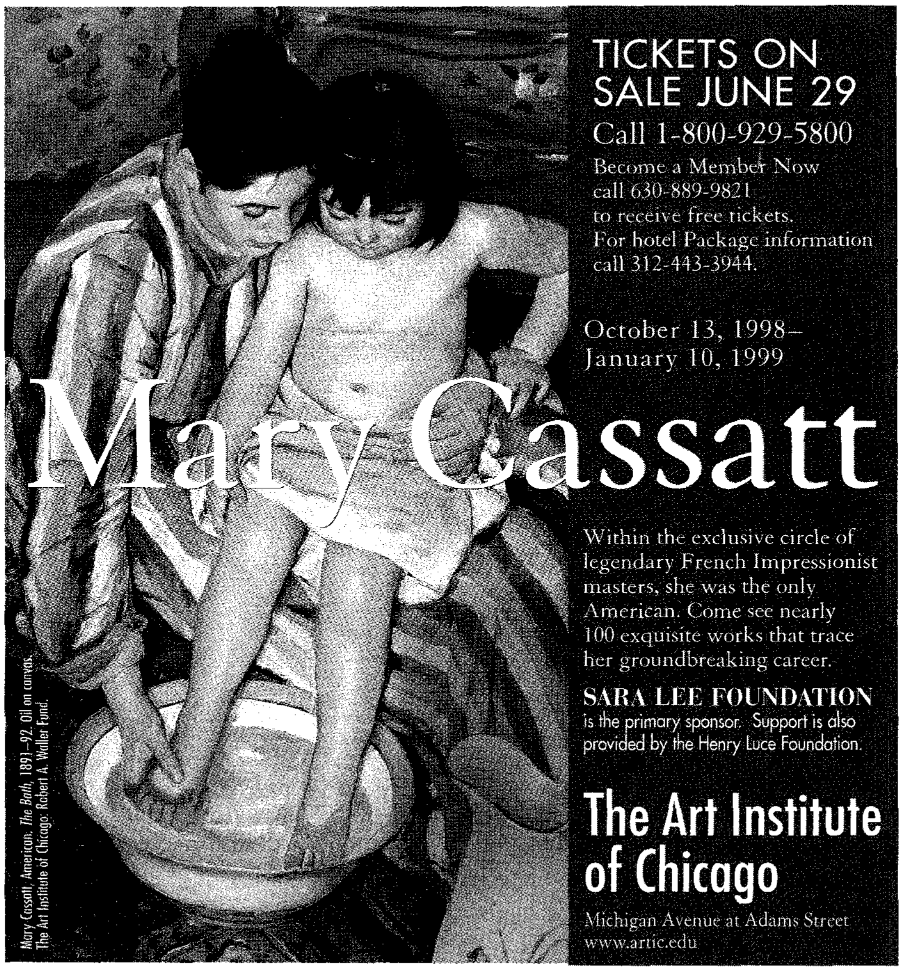
"Smell the people!" said Neal at a filling station in Algiers, before going to Bill Burroughs' house. I'll never forget the wild expectancy of that moment—the rickety streets, the palms, the great late-afternoon clouds over the Mississippi, the girls going by, the children, the soft bandannas of air coming like odor, the smell of people and rivers.

God is what I love.

- FEBRUARY 1, 1949. CALIFORNIA, RICHMOND TO FRISCO. (*Riding to Frisco from Richmond on a rainy night, in Hudson, sulking in back seat.*)

Oh, the pangs of travel! The spirituality of hashish!

I saw that Neal—well, I saw Neal at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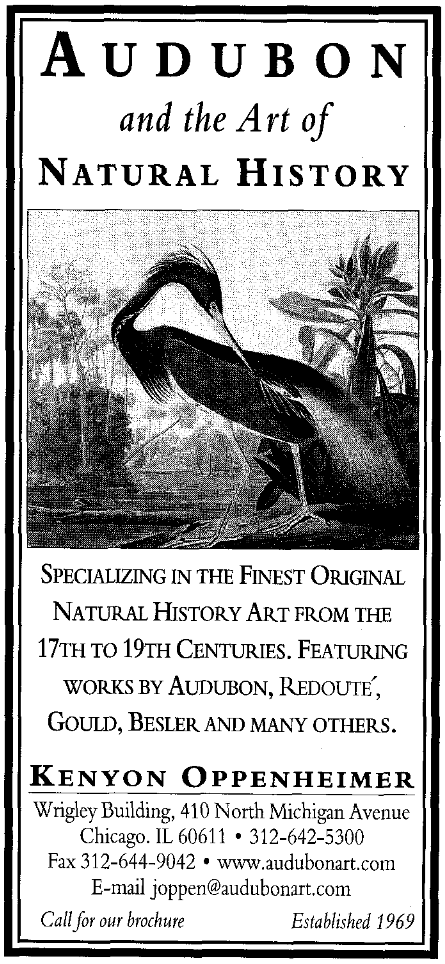
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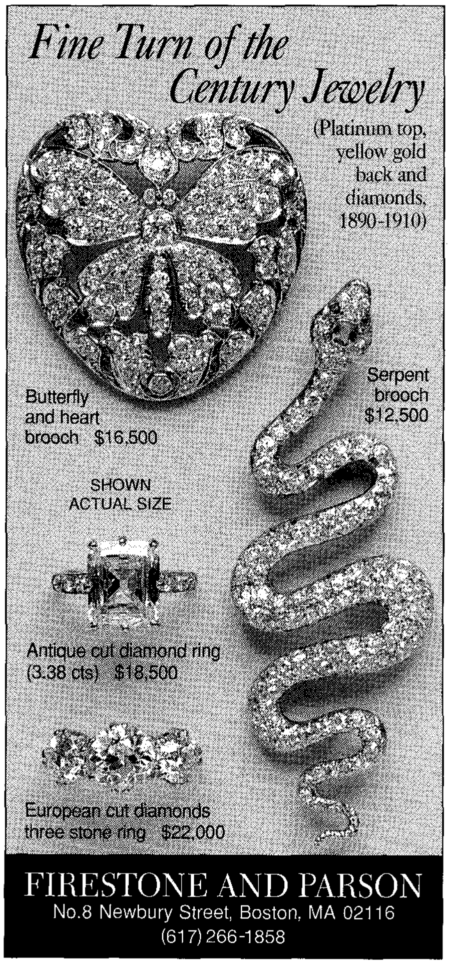
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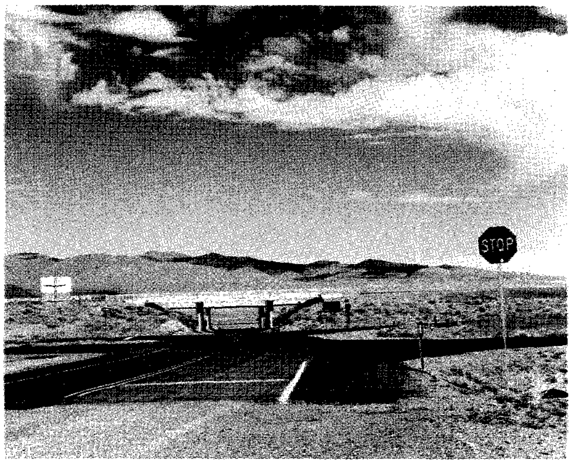
the wheel of the car, a wild machinery of kicks and sniffs and maniacal laughter, a kind of human dog; and then I saw Allen Ginsberg as a seventeenth-century poet in dark vestments standing in a sky of Rembrandt darkness; then I myself, like Slim Gaillard, stuck my head out of the window with Billie Holiday eyes and offered my soul to the whole world—big sad eyes, like the whores in the Richmond mud-shack saloon. Saw how much genius I had, too. Saw how sullen, blank Louanne hated me. Saw how unimportant I was to them; and the stupidity of my designs on her, and my betrayal of all male friends.



• FEBRUARY 6, 1949. SPOKANE. *Portland to Butte.* Two hobo panhandlers in back of bus on way out at midnight said they were bound for The Dalles—a small farming and lumber town—to beat a dollar or two. Drunk—

"Goddamit, don't get us thrown off at Hood River!"

"Beat the bus driver for a couple!"

We rolled in the big darkness of the Columbia River Valley, in a blizzard. I woke up after a nap and had a chat with one of the hoboes. (Said he would be an old-time outlaw if J. Edgar Hoover had not made it against the law to steal. I lied and said I had driven a stolen car from N.Y. to Frisco.)

I woke up at Tonompah Falls: hundreds of feet high, a hooded phantom dropped water from his huge, icy forehead. I was scared because I could not see what was in the darkness up beyond the hood of the ice—what hairy horrors, what night?

The bus driver plunged along over mad ridges. Then northeast through Connell, Sprague, Cheney (wheat and cattle lands like East Wyoming), in a gale of blizzards, to Spokane.

• FEBRUARY 7, 1949. MILES CITY. *Visions of Montana. Coeur d'Alene to Miles City.* We came along the waterbed of the Coeur d'Alene river, to Cataldo. I saw clusters of houses homesteading in the wild mountain holes. We rose to the heights in the snowy gray; below in the gulch one single shack light burned. Two boys in a car almost went off the ridge avoiding our bus.

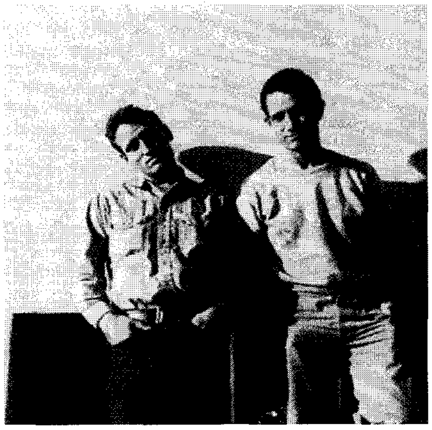
In Butte I stored my bag in a locker. A drunken Indian wanted me to go drinking with him, but I cautiously declined. A short walk around the sloping streets (in below-zero weather at night) showed that everybody in Butte was drunk. This was a Sunday night—I hoped the saloons would stay open until I had seen my fill. They close at dawn, if at all. I walked into one great old-time saloon and had a giant beer. Another gambling saloon was indescribable: groups of sullen Indians (Blackfeet) drinking red whiskey in the john; hundreds of men of all kinds playing cards; and one old professional house gambler who tore my heart out because he reminded me so much of my father—big; green eyeshade; handkerchief protruding from back pocket; great rugged, pockmarked angelic face (unlike Pop's)—and the asthmatic, laborious sadness of such men. I could not take my eyes off him. My whole concept of "On the Road" changed as I watched.

An old man with slitted eyes, called "John" by respectful men, coolly played cards till dawn; he has been playing cards in the Montana saloon-night of spittoons, smoke, and whiskey since 1880 (days of the winter cattle drive to Texas, and of Sitting Bull). Ah, dear Father.

BIGTIMBER. I saw old-timers sitting around in an old ramshackle inn (in the middle of the snowy prairie)—playing cards by old stoves, *at noon.* A boy of twenty, with one arm missing, sat in the middle of them. How sad!—and how beautiful he was because he was unable to work, and must sit forever with old-timers, and worry about his buddies punching cows and roistering outside. But how protected he is by Montana. Nowhere else in the world would I say it were at all beautiful for a young man to have but one arm. I shall never forget that boy, who seemed to realize that he was home.

In Billings I saw three of the most beautiful girls I've ever seen in all my life, eating in a sort of high-school lunchroom with their grave boyfriends. You can have your Utopian orgies: I should prefer an orgy with the Montanans.

• FEBRUARY 9, 1949. NORTH DAKOTA. *From Montana to Minnesota.* The mad bus driver almost went off the road on a sudden low snowdrift. It didn't faze him the least, till, a mile out of Dickinson, we came upon impassable drifts, and a traffic jam in the black Dakota midnight blasted by heath winds from the Saskatchewan Plain. There were lights, and many sheepskinned men toiling with shovels, and confusion—and bitterest cold out there, 25° below, I judge conservatively. Another eastbound bus was stuck, and many cars. The cause of the congestion was a small panel truck carrying slot machines to Montana. Eager young men with shovels came from the little town of Dickinson, most of them wearing red baseball caps, led by the sheriff, a strong joyous boy of twenty-five or so. Some of the boys were fourteen, even twelve. I thought of their mothers and



Neal Cassady and Jack Kerouac in the early nineteen-fifties.

LEFT: WARREN NEIDICH; RIGHT: CAROLYN CASSADY

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COUNTERPOINT

wives waiting at home with hot coffee, as though the traffic jam in the snow was an emergency touching Dickinson itself. Is this the "isolationist" Middle West? Where in the effete-thinking East would men work for others, for nothing, at midnight in howling, freezing gales?

We in the bus watched. Once in a while a boy came in to warm up. Finally the bus driver, a maniacal and good man, decided to pile on through. He gunned the Diesel Motor and the big bus went sloughing through drifts. We swerved into the panel truck: I believe we may have hit a jackpot. Then we swerved into a brand-new 1949 Ford. Wham! Wham! Finally, after an hour of travails, we were back on dry ground. In Dickinson, the café was crowded and full of Friday-night excitement about the snow jam. I wish that I had been born and raised in Dickinson, North Dakota.

The trip across sunny, flat Minnesota was uneventful. How dull it was to be in the East again: no more raw hopes; all was satisfied here.

• FEBRUARY 25, 1949. NEW YORK. The sad fact about the modern American small city like Poughkeepsie is that it has none of the strength of the metropolis and all the ugly pettiness. Dismal streets, dismal lives. Thousands of drunkards in bars. But out of this wreckage rises a veritable Cleophus—the Negro I met there this weekend. The future of America lies in the Negro like Cleo . . . I know it now. It is the simplicity and raw strength, rising out of the American ground, that will save us.

• APRIL 17, 1949. Waiting for word from Robert Giroux to begin revising "T & C." I feel like working. Also, I like the idea that we're going to "work in his office in the evenings"—with its coffee in cartons; in shirtsleeves (good Arrow shirts); maybe a pint of whiskey; chats; the big-city night of April and May outside the windows of Harcourt Brace, and old Broadway glowing.

Then finally the book will come out in print, in a big black volume, indicative of the darkness and solitary joy that went into its writing.

I will eventually be happy at the prospect of my worldly success.

Meanwhile, I have great ideas for my future Hollywood career. Imagine making "Look Homeward, Angel." And "Heart of Darkness," and "A Passage to India."

We began to hear rumors of New Orleans and "chicken, jazz 'n' gumbo."

WARREN NEIDICH

• APRIL 23, 1949. In the past week, Bill, Allen, and Huncke were all arrested and put in jail—Bill for narcotics, in New Orleans, the others for robbery and etc. in N.Y.

It's about time for me to start working on "On the Road" in earnest. For the first time in ages, I want to start a new life.

We—the whole family [Kerouac; his mother; his sister Nin; and her husband, Paul]—are going to move out to Colorado within a year. And within two years I'm going to marry a young lady. My aim is to write, make money, and buy a big wheat farm.

This is the turning point, the end of my "youth" and the beginning of manhood. How sad.

• JULY 4, 1949. DENVER. Today was one of the saddest days I've ever seen. My eyes are pale from it. In the morning we drove my Ma to the depot, bringing the little baby [Kerouac's nephew] in his diapers with us. A hot day. Sad, empty holiday streets in downtown Denver and no fireworks. In the depot we wheeled the baby around on marble floors. His yells mingled with the "roar of time" up in the dome. I checked my mother's suitcase in anticipation of a send-off stroll to a bar, or something, but we only sat sadly. Poor Paul read a *Mechanix* magazine. Then the train came. As I write this,

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at midnight, she's somewhere near Omaha.

In the afternoon Paul and Nin and the baby and I tried to make a go of it with a picnic at Berkeley Lake. But we only sat sadly under gray skies, and ate tasteless sandwiches.

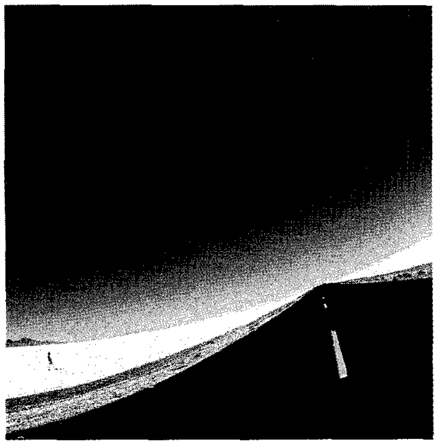
At the fireworks at Denver U. Stadium great crowds had been waiting since twilight, sleepy children and all; yet no sooner did the shots begin in the sky than these unhappy people trailed home, before the end of the show, as though they were too unhappy to see what they had waited for.

• AUGUST, 1949. I walk in darkness, and no one will help me but my own mad self. I want to communicate with Dostoyevski in heaven, and ask old Melville if he's still discouraged, and Wolfe why he let himself die at thirty-eight. I don't want to give up. I promise I shall never give up, and that I'll die yelling and laughing.

The softball game in Denver was better than all this poor philosophizing. In a fever of sad understanding, I saw beyond envies such as these.

I had just seen Bob Giroux off on the airplane to N.Y., and walked and hitched back from the airport in a mammoth plains dusk, a speck on the surface of the sad red earth. I arrived among the lights of Twenty-seventh and Welton, the Denver Negro-town.

With Giroux, at Central City, I had seen that my being a published writer was going to be merely a sad affair—not that he intended to show me that. I saw how sad he was, and therefore how the best and highest that the "world" has to offer was in fact empty, spiritless; because after all he is a great New Yorker, a man of affairs, a success at thirty-five, a famous young editor. I told him there were "no laurel wreaths," i.e., the poet did not find ecstasies in worldly fame, nor in fortune, nor even in anything like acclaim or regard. He quite sensibly told me that the laurel wreath is worn only in the moment of writing.



But that night my dream of glory turned gray, because I saw that the best the "white world" has to offer was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, music; not enough night.

I stopped at a little shack where a man sold hot, red chili in paper containers. I bought some and ate it strolling in the dark, mysterious streets. I wished I was Negro, a Denver Mexican, or even a Jap, anything but a white man disillusioned by the best in his own "white world." (And all my life I had white ambitions!)

I passed the dark porch steps of Mexican and Negro homes. There were soft voices, and occasionally the dusky leg of some mysterious, sensual girl. A group of Negro women came by and one of the younger ones detached herself from motherlike elders to come to me and say, "Hello, Eddy."

But I knew damn well I wasn't so fortunate as to be Eddy—some white kid who dug the colored girls down there. I was merely myself.

I was so sad—in the violet dark, strolling—wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-minded, ecstatic Negroes of America. All this reminded me of Neal and Louanne, who had been children here and nearby. How I yearned to be transformed into an Eddy, a Neal, a jazz musician, a nigger, a construction worker, a softball pitcher, anything in these wild, dark, humming streets of Denver night—anything but myself so pale and unhappy, so dim.

In the back seat Al and Rhoda made love. Neal drove with the bebop music playing.

At Twenty-third and Welton the great softball game was going on under floodlights which practically illuminated the gas tank. What a cruel touch!—now it was the nostalgia of the Gas House Kids. A great eager crowd roared at every play. The strange young heroes, of all kinds, white, colored, Mexican, Indian, were performing with utter seriousness. They were just sandlot kids in uniform, while I, in my college days, with my "white ambitions," had to be a professional-type athlete. I hated myself thinking of it. Never in my life had I been innocent enough to play ball this way before all the families and girls of the neighborhood—no, I had to go and be a college punk, playing before coeds in stadiums, and join fraternities, and wear sports jackets instead of Levi's and sweatshirts.

Some people are made to wish they were other than what they are, only so they may wish and wish and wish. This is my star. What had I done with my life, shutting off the doors to real, boyish, human joy like this, what had made me strive to be "different" from all this?

Now it was too late.

I walked away to the dumb downtown streets of Denver, for the trolley at Colfax and Broadway, where the big Capitol building is, with its lit-up dome and swarded lawns. I walked the pitch-black roads and came to the

LEFT: WARREN NEIDICH—ALL PHOTOGRAPHS FROM "BEYOND THE VANISHING POINT"; RIGHT: ©ALLEN GINSBERG TRUST

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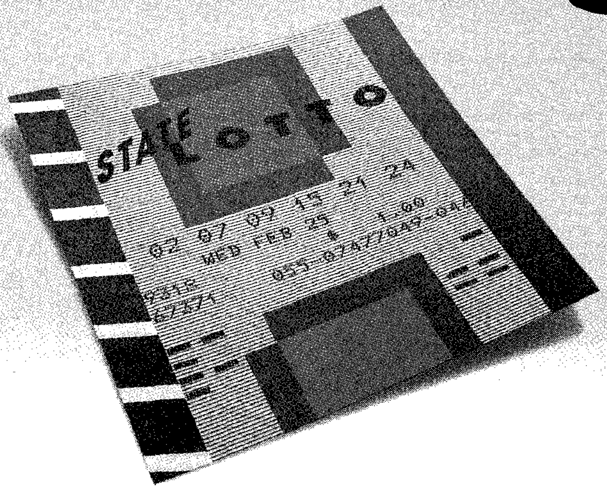

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house I'd spent my $1000 on for nothing, where my sister and brother-in-law were sitting worrying about money and work and insurance and security and all that, in the *white-tiled* kitchen.

• SEPTEMBER 21, 1949. NEW YORK. After a little work in the office Bob Giroux and I put on our tuxedos and went to the Ballets Russes at the Met. It is the most exquisite of the arts—one can die a strange little death after seeing the ballet for the first time. The girls en masse in blue light are like a vision; they all look Oriental, or Russian, too. Bob and I visited the great dancer, Leon Danielian, in his dressing room. Danielian sat in a chair, the old Death's Head Impresario of the Ballet, looking like an ancient John Kingsland. Gore Vidal was there with his mother. Everybody keeps saying, "I like her better than I do Gore." Our group consisted of John Kelly (a millionaire of the arts and Wall Street), and Gore Vidal and Mrs. Vidal, Danielian and his sister, Don Gaynor—who is like the sinister intellectual at parties in British films—and later John Latouche and Burgess Meredith (who is funny).

18231
CASSADY

CAROLYN CASSADY

We spent $55 in the Blue Angel just for drinks and supper. I gunned the little French hat-check girl and made a date with her. Berthy's her name—so great. But this evening I learned that I have to change now—being so much "in demand" it is impossible to accept all invitations to lunch, and equally impossible to try to communicate with everybody, as I've always done out of mere joy. Now I'll have to start selecting. Isn't that awful?

It appears that I am terrifically naïve. "Yes, yes!" I say. "Oh yes, I'll call you!" And to top that off, running after every pretty girl I see (in my tuxedo), making

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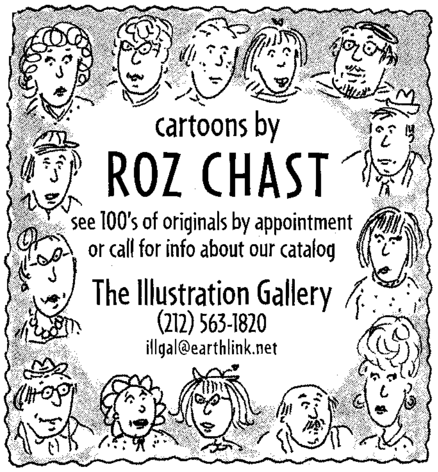

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dates that conflict with everything else—a bloody mess. Finally, I simply go home and sleep all day. They think I'm crazy.

Berthy is a sizzling little Parisienne. We will meet in Paris. She's married to a New Yorker, and is soon divorcing him, and has cute little dark-eyed scruples that I want to devour out of sight.

One thing at a time.

• NOVEMBER 30, 1949. People aren't interested in facts, but in ejaculations. That is why straight naturalism fails to express life. Who wants Dos Passos' old camera eye? Everybody wants to *Go!* So must the author, oblivious to all petty details, huffing and puffing in the heat of his fiery soul, go!

Novelists should write about rational people? Trilling's "The Middle of the Journey"? Trilling pulled the most absurd irrational mask it has been my honor to observe: after Ginsberg was thrown out of college, and I had been mixed up in this downfall and barred from the Columbia campus, Trilling refused to recognize me on the street in the most farcical way, as if I'd suddenly acquired leprosy and it was his rational duty to himself as a Liberal Enlightener of Intellectuals to repair at a safe distance from the area of my septic running sores. From down the street I waved at him eagerly. He hurried on, deep in thought. Finally he came face to face with me at a drugstore counter behind which I was implacably washing dishes. There was nothing he could do; he forced a wan smile, paid for his coffee, hurriedly drank it. There was a crush at the door; he couldn't get out fast enough.

I can take no crap from such men about my own work.

• FEBRUARY 18, 1950. In twelve days my "Town and City" will be published and the reviews will appear. Will I be rich or poor? Will I be famous or forgotten? Am ready for this with my "philosophy of simplicity" (something which ties in a philosophy of poverty with inward joy, as I was in 1947 and 1948).

• TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1950. My new plans for March: soon as I get my money, I'll join the morning club at the Y and work out almost every weekday. Also, black coffee (no cream and sugar); chinning from the door (which has no real grip, so I can only do ten or eleven or twelve); and less sleep. I've been getting fat and lazy. Time for action, time for a new life, my real life. I'll be twenty-eight in two weeks. Two meals a day instead of three. Much travelling. No stagnation. No more sorrows! No more metaphysical awe! Action . . . speed . . . grace . . . Go! Writing from true thoughts instead of stale rehashes. I'm going to express more and record less in "On the Road."

—You have to believe in life before you can accomplish anything. That is why dour, regular-houred, rational-souled State Department diplomats have done nothing for mankind. Why live if not for excellence? ♦

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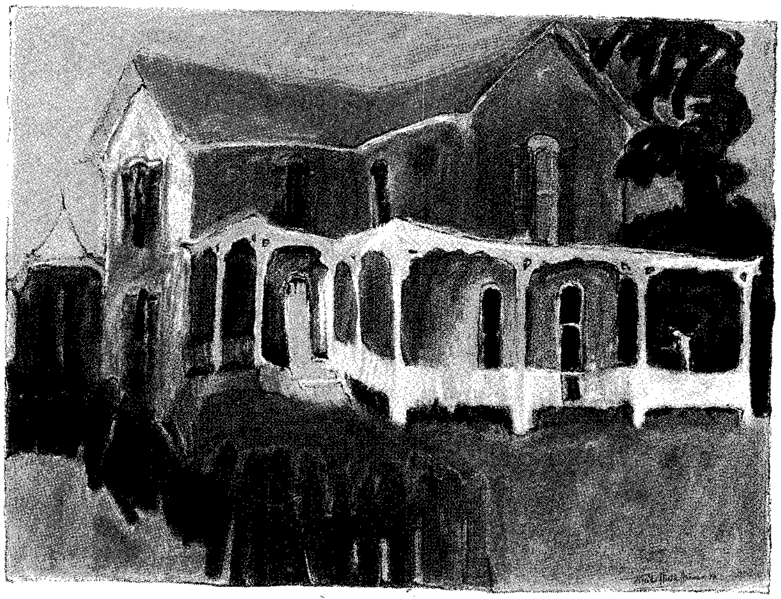
SECRETS OF A SOUTHERN PORCH

BY EUGENE WALTER

IN my childhood, the porch was a concept as well as a place. In Mobile, Alabama, everybody would always sit on the front porch shelling peas and exchanging the neighborhood gossip. If my grandmother sat facing the street, that meant she would "receive": other ladies, across the street, next door, or passing by, could come up on the porch and talk to her.



Gossiping, drinking, and talking dirty in French—it all happened on the porch.

FREIDA HAMM'S "COLUMBIA GREEN HOUSE," 1997/COURTESY LEDBETTER LUSK GALLERY

If she sat sidewise, with her profile to the street, you could greet her and speak to her from the sidewalk but you couldn't come up onto the porch. If she sat with her back to the street, she was invisible. It meant that she was reading the paper or hadn't done her hair yet. You wouldn't say anything to her.

For me, every morning on the front porch was Carnival. There was a passing parade of street venders and peddlers of all kinds pushing their wagons and carts down Conti Street. There were no sounds of radio then, no sounds of television. Between passing cars, a silence fell that would be broken only by certain wonderful sounds:

"Corn! Corn! Too sweet to eat!"

"Snap beans that snap themselves! Soft and tender!"

"Waterme-e-e-e-e-lonnns! Ripe just right! Ripe just right!"

The oysterman came down the street with his pushcart full of ice and oysters covered by a great burlap flap that smelled part wet dog and part rowboat, with an umbrella on a pole quaking over everything. His cry was best of all: "Oy-oy-oy-sterman, manny-man, manny-man, manny-man! Get your fresh oy-oy-oy-sters man, manny-man, manny-man, manny-man!" We used to rush down to the curb just to hear it.

The iceman had a huge wooden truck lined with zinc, filled with huge blocks of ice, and pulled by a white horse. Every child for blocks around followed the iceman to catch the "snow" that rained down when he sawed the ice. Some children ate it right there, and others ran home, hands cupped, to put either vanilla or lemon extract on it, or grenadine or molasses.

Miz Mimms, the country-butter lady, came in an old Chevrolet whose rumble seat was filled with straw baskets that held ice and pats of pale sweet butter wrapped in green leaves. She made a proper entry, with much ado, and was always invited to sit and rest a moment, have a glass of iced tea, and share those details gleaned from other households. "I do feel sorry for her living alone," Miz Mimms would say. "But who owns those men's socks she hangs on her back porch?"

Old black men with sugarcane stalks

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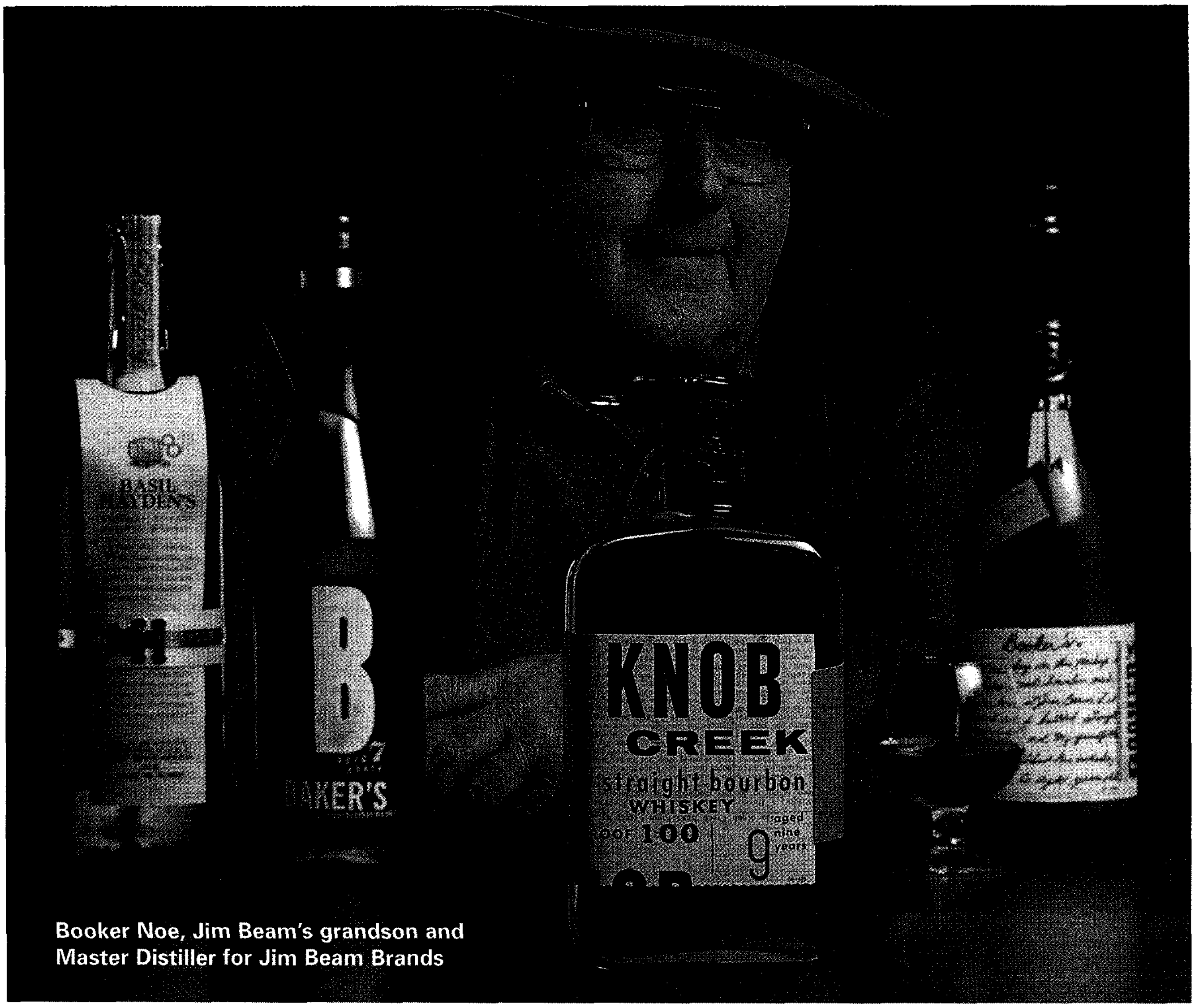

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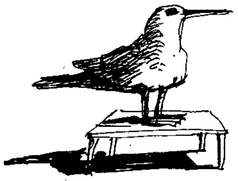
over their shoulders, children selling cut flowers stolen from that morning's funeral wreaths at Magnolia Cemetery, and the pot mender, with his strange tools and spirit lamp and bits of lead and solder, would pass by. The postman always stopped for a word. Conversations went on, rice was picked over, coffee was ground, beads were re-strung, and paper wicks were folded for next winter's fireplaces. Somehow, a whole world was encompassed, seized, dealt with, and all before noon.

A LOT of sloppy household stuff was done on the back porch. If you had green peas or the first butter beans, you often shelled them on the front porch. But peeling shrimp or cutting the tips off okra was messy. That was done on the back porch. And then some days my grandmother would just stay in her wrapper till it was time to dress for lunch. She didn't want to sit on the front porch in hot August. She'd have her hair pulled straight back with eighteen thousand hairpins so not one hair was touching her neck, and she'd wear her slop-slop slippers.

Then, suddenly, there might be a silent presence on the back porch. The boboshillies. These were old black women from the backwoods. They never knocked. They never cried out. Always dressed in white, they had their hair under a white turban, almost like a nurse or a nun. But they'd sometimes wear colored aprons with big pockets that they carried things in, like gumbo filé powder, bay-laurel leaves, sassafras root. They had all kinds of strange things from the swamp. They sold medicinal herbs to black people in town—things for childbirth, fever, and all that—but I don't think they sold them to white people. I was scared of one very old lady. I don't think I ever heard her utter a sound, and she moved like a shadow, completely silent and seemingly weightless.



At night, porch life went on forever. When the gossip got really good, my grandmother would switch from English to French, so that little eavesdroppers couldn't hear: "And nobody knew where she was, they looked high and low, nobody could find her, and then she was seen in New Orleans with—" And the rest would be in French.

On special nights, the children from several houses would get together and play steamboat. You took an old shoebox and cut out crescent moons, or stars, or flowers. Then you lined the box with scraps of colored tissue paper that came from candies or oranges, and filled it halfway with sand or ashes, and you had two little vigil lights from the church and a long string attached to the front, and you'd go up and down the sidewalk pulling your steamboat. The procession of steamboats would be a block long, going up- and downriver. And you'd say, "Toot-toot! Ding-ding! King's Landing! Demopolis!"

The other thing we did was the penny-poppy show. You saved odd things, like an unusual wine cork that had come out of a bottle of port from a Portuguese ship. You saved a lizard skull that had been found somewhere, or a piece of colored glass. And you'd dig a hole in the ground and line it with either tinfoil or parts of a broken mirror. Then you arranged your unusual things in it and covered it with a piece of wood or cardboard, or maybe some banana leaves. Somebody had to pay, either two banana caramels or one penny, and you'd let that person see your penny-poppy show, just for a minute: you'd pop it open and pop it shut.

I remember that once a little girl in the neighborhood put a used condom in one. She didn't know what it was. She had found it in the shrubbery near the Baptist church. She'd washed it and had it lying out. Of course, the boys knew what it was, and she was about to burst into tears, because she thought we were laughing at her penny-poppy show.

Most people went in at around ten-thirty. If it was really hot, the men would stay out forever. They'd be drinking juleps, or something called Cuba libre—very fashionable during the twenties and thirties—which had Coca-Cola and rum in it, about half and half. Very cold. Coca-Cola then was not sweet, and everyone said it had a pinch of real cocaine in it. It was called "the pause that refreshes"—that was the ad—and it was. All of us, at around ten in the morning and in midafternoon, when we woke from our naps, wanted a Coca-Cola. After all, it was a chemist in Atlanta who had invented it—boiled it up in his back yard. A Southern drink for a Southern climate. So the men would stay out on the front porch, rocking and talking and sipping their Cuba libres. ♦

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FICTION

THAT FEELING, YOU CAN ONLY SAY WHAT IT IS IN FRENCH

A second honeymoon in the Florida Keys. What could be more relaxing?

BY STEPHEN KING

FLOYD, *what's that over there? Oh shit.* The man's voice speaking these words was vaguely familiar, but the words themselves were just a disconnected snip of dialogue, the kind of thing you heard when you were channel-surfing with the remote. There was no one named Floyd in her life. Still, that was the start. Even before she saw the little girl in the red pinafore, there were those disconnected words.

But it was the little girl who brought it on strong. "Oh-oh, I'm getting that feeling," Carol said.

The girl in the pinafore was in front of a country market called Carson's—"Beer, Wine, Groc, Fresh Bait, Lottery"—crouched down with her butt between her ankles and the bright-red apron-dress tucked between her thighs, playing with a doll. The doll was yellow-haired and dirty, the kind that's round and stuffed and boneless in the body.

"What feeling?" Bill asked.

"You know. The one you can only say what it is in French. Help me here."

"Déjà vu," he said.

"That's it," she said, and turned to look at the little girl one more time. *She'll have the doll by one leg,* Carol thought. *Holding it upside down by one leg with its grimy yellow hair hanging down.*

But the little girl had abandoned the doll on the store's splintery gray steps and had gone over to look at a dog caged up in the back of a station wagon. Then Bill and Carol Shelton went around a curve in the road and the store was out of sight.

"How much farther?" Carol asked.

They were supposed to be on the ground in twenty minutes.

FRANK SCHRAMM'S "BOEING 707-400 ON TAKE-OFF FROM ROISSY-CHARLES-DE-GAULLE, FRANCE, OCTOBER 8, 1989" COURTESY JAMES DANZIGER GALLERY

Bill looked at her with one eyebrow raised and his mouth dimpled at one corner—left eyebrow, right dimple, always the same. The look that said, *You think I'm amused, but I'm really irritated. For the ninety-trillionth or so time in the marriage, I'm really irritated. You don't know that, though, because you can only see about two inches into me and then your vision fails.*

But she had better vision than he realized; it was one of the secrets of the marriage. Probably he had a few secrets of his own. And there were, of course, the ones they kept together.

"I don't know," he said. "I've never been here."

"But you're sure we're on the right road."

"Once you get over the causeway and onto Sanibel Island, there's only one," he said. "It goes across to Captiva, and there it ends. But before it does we'll come to Palm House. That I promise you."

The arch in his eyebrow began to flatten. The dimple began to fill in. He was returning to what she thought of as the Great Level. She had come to dislike the Great Level, too, but not as much as the eyebrow and the dimple, or his sarcastic way of saying "Excuse me?" when you said something he considered stupid, or his habit of pooching out his lower lip when he wanted to appear thoughtful and deliberative.

"Bill?"

"Mmm?"

"Do you know anyone named Floyd?"

"There was Floyd Denning. He and I ran the downstairs snack bar at Christ the Redeemer in our senior year. I told you about him, didn't I? He stole the Coke money one Friday and spent the weekend in New York with his girlfriend. They suspended him and expelled her. What made you think of him?"

"I don't know," she said. Easier than telling him that the Floyd with whom Bill had gone to high school wasn't the Floyd the voice in her head was speaking to. At least, she didn't think it was.

Second honeymoon, that's what you call this, she thought, looking at the palms that lined Highway 867, a white bird that stalked along the shoulder like an angry preacher, and a sign that read "Seminole Wildlife Park, Bring a Carful for $10." *Florida the Sunshine State. Florida the Hospitality State. Not to mention Florida the Second-Honeymoon State. Florida, where Bill Shelton and Carol Shelton, the former Carol O'Neill, of Lynn, Massachusetts, came on their first honeymoon twenty-five years before. Only*

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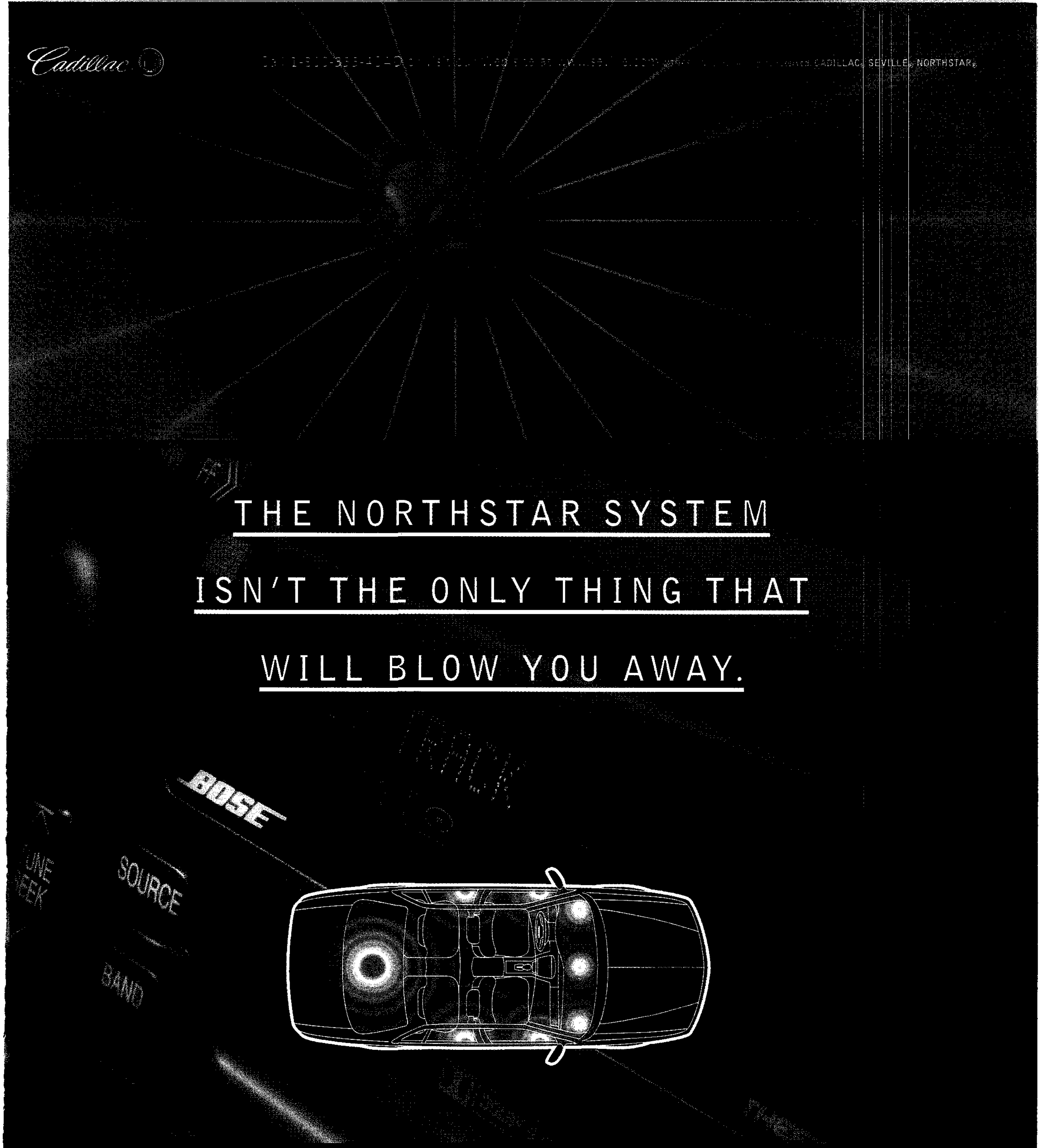

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that was on the other side, the Atlantic side, at a little cabin colony, and there were cockroaches in the bureau drawers. He couldn't stop touching me. That was all right, though, in those days I wanted to be touched. Hell, I wanted to be torched like Atlanta in "Gone with the Wind," and he torched me, rebuilt me, torched me again. Now it's silver. Twenty-five is silver. And sometimes I get that feeling.

They were approaching a curve, and she thought, *Three crosses on the right side of the road. Two small ones flanking a bigger one. The small ones are clapped-together wood. The one in the middle is white birch with a picture on it, a tiny photograph of the seventeen-year-old boy who lost control of his car on this curve, one drunk night that was his last drunk night, and this is where his girlfriend and her girlfriends marked the spot*—

Bill drove around the curve. A pair of black crows, plump and shiny, lifted off from something pasted to the macadam in a splat of blood. They had eaten so well that Carol wasn't sure they were going to get out of the way until they did. There were no crosses, not on the left, not on the right. Just roadkill in the middle, a woodchuck or something, now passing beneath a luxury car that had never been north of the Mason-Dixon Line.

Floyd, what's that over there?

"What's wrong?"

"Huh?" She looked at him, bewildered, feeling a little wild.

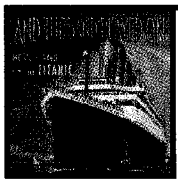
"You're sitting bolt upright. Got a cramp in your back?"

"Just a slight one." She settled back by degrees. "I had that feeling again. The déjà vu."

"Is it gone?"

"Yes," she said, but she was lying. It had retreated a little, but that was all. She'd had this before, but never so *continuously.* It came up and went down, but it didn't go away. She'd been aware of it ever since that thing about Floyd started knocking around in her head—and then the little girl in the red pinafore.

But, really, hadn't she felt something before either of those things? Hadn't it actually started when they came down the steps of the Lear 35 into the hammering heat of the Fort Myers sunshine? Or even before? En route from Boston?



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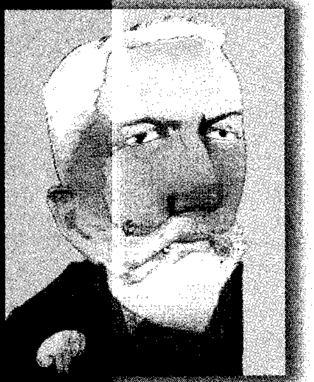

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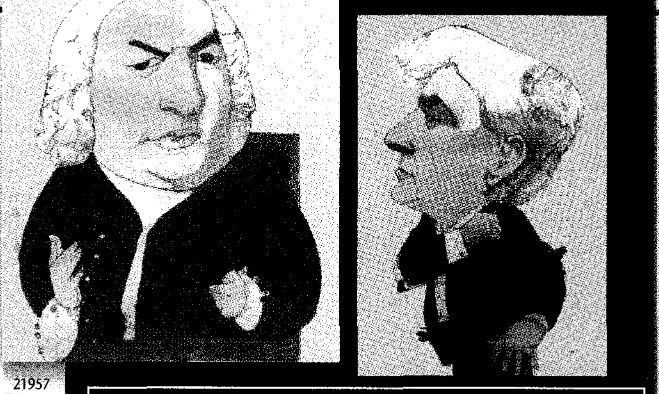

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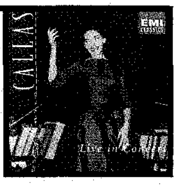

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They were coming to an intersection. Overhead was a flashing yellow light, and she thought, *To the right is a used-car lot and a sign for the Sanibel Community Theatre.*

Then she thought, *No, it'll be like the crosses that weren't there. It's a strong feeling but it's a false feeling.*

Here was the intersection. On the right there *was* a used-car lot—Palmdale Motors. Carol felt a real jump at that, a stab of something sharper than disquiet. She told herself to quit being stupid. There had to be car lots all over Florida and if you predicted one at every intersection sooner or later the law of averages made you a prophet. It was a trick mediums had been using for hundreds of years.

Besides, there's no theatre sign.

But there was another sign. It was Mary the Mother of God, the ghost of all her childhood days, holding out her hands the way she did on the medallion Carol's grandmother had given her for her tenth birthday. Her grandmother had pressed it into her hand and looped the chain around her fingers, saying, "Wear her always as you grow, because all the hard days are coming." She had worn it, all right. At Our Lady of Angels grammar and middle school she had worn it, then at St. Vincent de Paul high. She wore the medal until breasts grew around it like ordinary miracles, and then someplace, probably on the class trip to Hampton Beach, she had lost it. Coming home on the bus she had tongue-kissed for the first time. Butch Soucy had been the boy, and she had been able to taste the cotton candy he'd eaten.

Mary on that long-gone medallion and Mary on this billboard had exactly the same look, the one that made you feel guilty of thinking impure thoughts even when all you were thinking about was a peanut-butter sandwich. Beneath Mary, the sign said "Mother of Mercy Charities Help the Florida Homeless—Won't *You* Help *Us*?"

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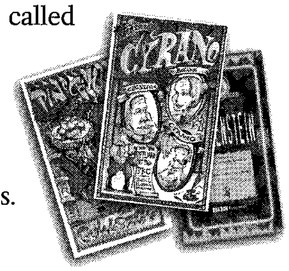

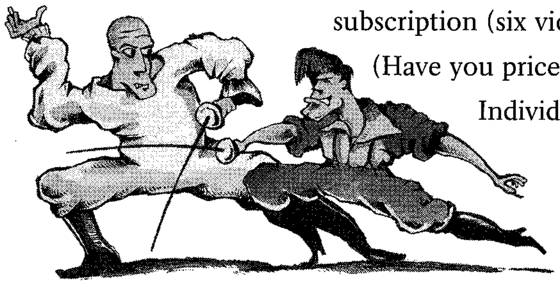

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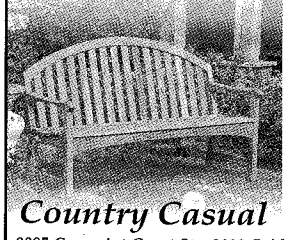

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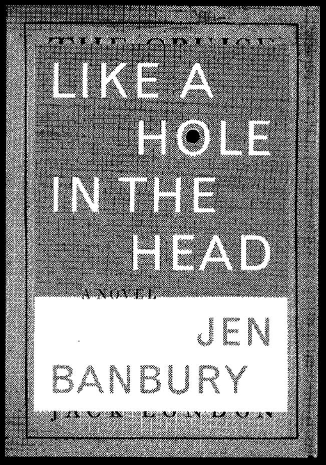

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brow-and-dimple look. Bill's I'm-only-pretending-to-be-pissed tone of voice, the one that meant he really *was* pissed, at least a little.

"Nothing." She gave him the best smile she could manage.

"You really don't seem like yourself. Maybe you shouldn't have slept on the plane."

"You're probably right," she said, and not just to be agreeable, either. After all, how many women got a second honeymoon on Captiva Island for their twenty-fifth anniversary? Round trip on a chartered Learjet? Ten days at one of those places where your money was no good (at least until MasterCard coughed up the bill at the end of the month) and if you wanted a massage a big Swedish babe would come and pummel you in your six-room beach house?

THINGS had been different at the start. Bill, whom she'd first met at a crosstown high-school dance and then met again at college three years later (another ordinary miracle), had begun their married life working as a janitor, because there were no openings in the computer industry. It was 1973, and computers were essentially going nowhere and they were living in a grotty place in Revere, not on the beach but close to it, and all night people kept going up the stairs to buy drugs from the two sallow creatures who lived in the apartment above them and listened endlessly to dopey records from the sixties. Carol used to lie awake waiting for the shouting to start, thinking, *We won't ever get out of here, we'll grow old and die within earshot of Cream and Blue Cheer and the fucking Dodgem cars down on the beach.*

Bill, exhausted at the end of his shift, would sleep through the noise, lying on his side, sometimes with one hand on her hip. And when it wasn't there she often put it there, especially if the creatures upstairs were arguing with their customers. Bill was all she had. Her parents had practically disowned her when she married him. He was a Catholic, but the wrong sort of Catholic. Gram had asked why she wanted to go with that boy when anyone could tell he was shanty, how could she fall for all his foolish talk, why did she want to break her father's heart. And what could she say?

It was a long distance from that place in Revere to a private jet soaring at forty-one thousand feet; a long way to this rental car, which was a Crown Victoria—what the goodfellas in the gangster movies invariably called a Crown Vic—heading for ten days in a place where the tab would probably be . . . well, she didn't even want to think about it.

Floyd? . . . *Oh shit.*

"Carol? What is it now?"

"Nothing," she said. Up ahead by the road was a little pink bungalow, the porch flanked by palms—seeing those trees with their fringy heads lifted against the blue sky made her think of Japanese Zeros coming in low, their underwing machine guns firing, such an association clearly the result of a youth misspent in front of the TV—and as they passed a black woman would come out. She would be drying her hands on a piece of pink towelling and would watch them expressionlessly as they passed, rich folks in a Crown Vic headed for Captiva, and she'd have no idea that Carol Shelton once lay awake in a ninety-dollar-a-month apartment, listening to the records and the drug deals upstairs, feeling something alive inside her, something that made her think of a cigarette that had fallen down behind the drapes at a party, small and unseen but smoldering away next to the fabric.

"Hon?"

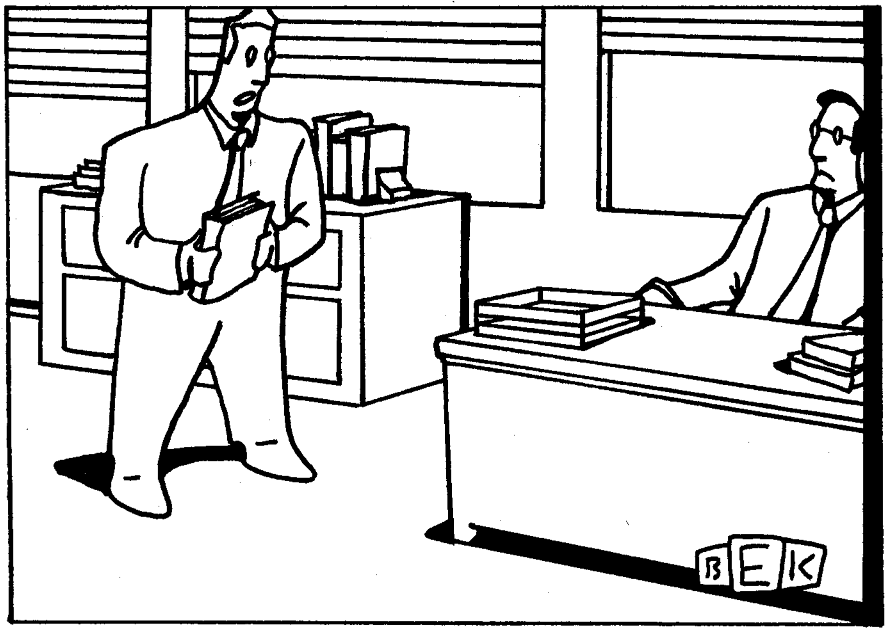
"Nothing, I said." They passed the house. There was no woman. An old man—white, not black—sat in a rocking chair, watching them pass. There were rimless glasses on his nose and a piece of ragged pink towelling, the same shade as the house, across his lap. "I'm fine now. Just anxious to get there and change into some shorts."

His hand touched her hip—where he had so often touched her during those first days—and then crept a little farther inland. She thought about stopping him (Roman hands and Russian fingers, they used to say) and didn't. They were, after all, on their second honeymoon. Also, it would make that expression go away.

"Maybe," he said, "we could take a pause. You know, after the dress comes off and before the shorts go on."

"I think that's a lovely idea," she said, and put her hand over his, pressed both more tightly against her. Ahead was a sign that would read "Palm House 3 Mi. on Left" when they got close enough to see it.

The sign actually read "Palm House 2 Mi. on Left." Beyond it was another sign, Mother Mary again, with her hands outstretched and that little electric shimmy that wasn't quite



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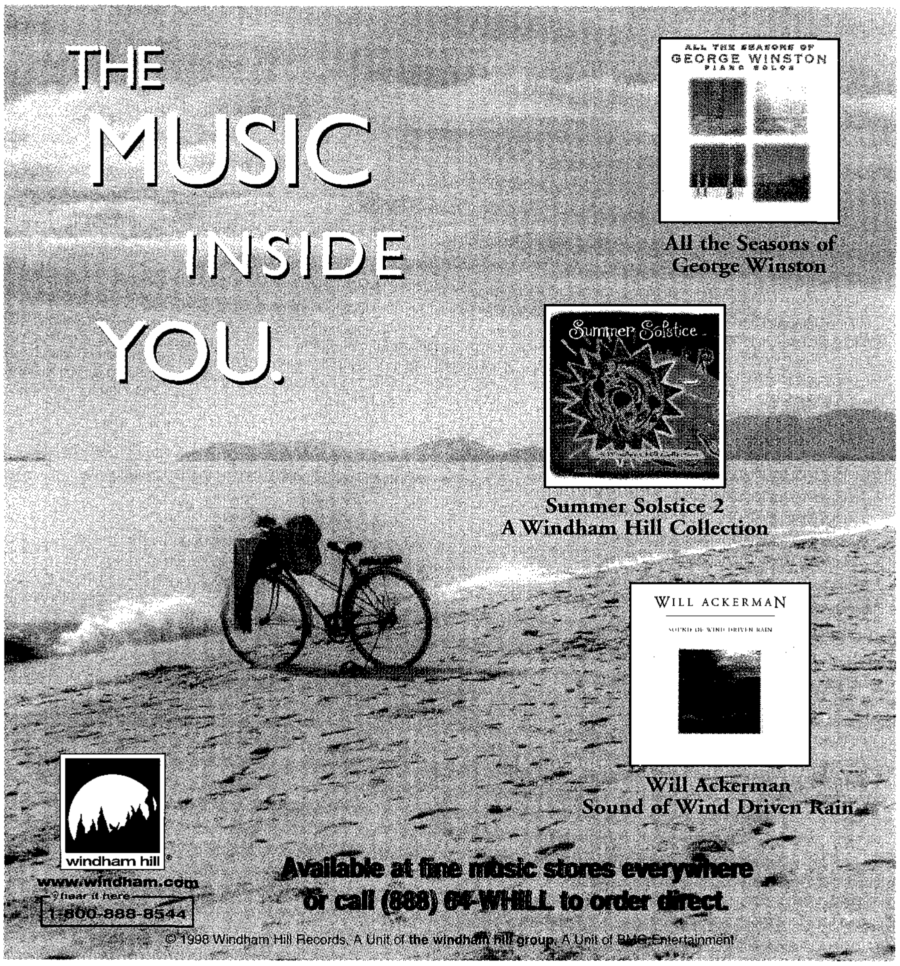
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a halo around her head. This version read "Mother of Mercy Charities Help the Florida Sick—Won't *You* Help *Us*?"

Bill said, "The next one ought to say 'Burma Shave.'"

She didn't understand what he meant, but it was clearly a joke and so she smiled. The next one would say "Mother of Mercy Charities Help the Florida Hungry," but she couldn't tell him that. Dear Bill. Dear in spite of his sometimes stupid expressions and his sometimes unclear allusions. *He'll most likely leave you, and you know something? If you go through with it that's probably the best luck you can expect.* This according to her father. Dear Bill, who had proved that just once, just that one crucial time, her judgment had been far better than her father's. She was still married to the man her Gram had called "the big boaster." At a price, true, but everyone paid a price.

Her head itched. She scratched at it absently, watching for the next Mother of Mercy billboard.

Horrible as it was to say, things had started turning around when she lost the baby. That was just before Bill got a job with Beach Computers, out on Route 128; that was when the first winds of change in the industry began to blow.

Lost the baby, had a miscarriage—they all believed that except maybe Bill. Certainly her family had believed it: Dad, Mom, Gram. "Miscarriage" was the story they told, miscarriage was a Catholic's story if ever there was one. *Hey, Mary, what's the story,* they had sometimes sung when they skipped rope, feeling daring, feeling sinful, the skirts of their uniforms flipping up and down over their scabby knees. That was at Our Lady of Angels, where Sister Annunciata would spank your knuckles with her ruler if she caught you gazing out the window during Sentence Time, where Sister Dormatilla would tell you that a million years was but the first tick of eternity's endless clock (and you could spend eternity in Hell, most people did, it was easy). In Hell you would live forever with your skin on fire and your bones roasting. Now she was in Florida, now she was in a Crown Vic sitting next to her husband, whose hand was still in her crotch; the dress would be wrinkled but who cared if it got that look off his face, and why wouldn't the feeling *stop*?

She thought of a mailbox with "Raglan" painted on the side and an American-flag decal on the front, and although the name turned out to be "Reagan" and the flag a Grateful Dead sticker, the box was there. She thought of a small black dog trotting briskly along the other side of the road, its head down, sniffling, and the small black dog was there. She thought again of the billboard and, yes, there it was: "Mother of Mercy Charities Help the Florida Hungry—Won't *You* Help *Us*?"

Bill was pointing. "There—see? I think that's Palm House. No, not where the billboard is, the other side. Why do they let people put those things up out here, anyway?"

"I don't know." Her head itched. She scratched, and black dandruff began falling past her eyes. She looked at her fingers and was horrified to see dark smutches on the tips; it was as if someone had just taken her fingerprints.

"Bill?" She raked her hand through her blond hair and this time the flakes were bigger. She saw they were not flakes of skin but flakes of paper. There was a face on one, peering out of the char like a face peering out of a botched negative.

"*Bill*?"

"What? Wh—" Then a total change in his voice, and that frightened her more than the way the car swerved. "Christ, honey, what's in your hair?"

The face appeared to be Mother Teresa's. Or was that just because she'd been thinking about Our Lady of Angels? Carol plucked it from her dress, meaning to show it to Bill, and it crumbled between her fingers before she could. She turned to him and saw that his glasses were melted to his cheeks. One of his eyes had popped from its socket and then split like a grape pumped full of blood.

And I knew it, she thought. *Even before I turned, I knew it. Because I had that feeling.*

A bird was crying in the trees. On the billboard, Mary held out her hands. Carol tried to scream. Tried to scream.

"CAROL?"

It was Bill's voice, coming from a thousand miles away. Then his hand—not pressing the folds of her dress into her crotch, but on her shoulder.

"You O.K., babe?"

She opened her eyes to brilliant sunlight and her ears to the steady hum of the Learjet's engines. And something else—pressure against her eardrums. She looked from Bill's mildly concerned face to the dial below the temperature gauge in the cabin and saw that it had wound down to 28,000.

"Landing?" she said, sounding muzzy to herself. "Already?"

"It's fast, huh?" Sounding pleased, as if he had flown it himself instead of only paying for it. "Pilot says we'll be on the ground in Fort Myers in twenty minutes. You took a hell of a jump, girl."

"I had a nightmare."

He laughed—the plummy ain't-you-the-silly-billy laugh she had come really

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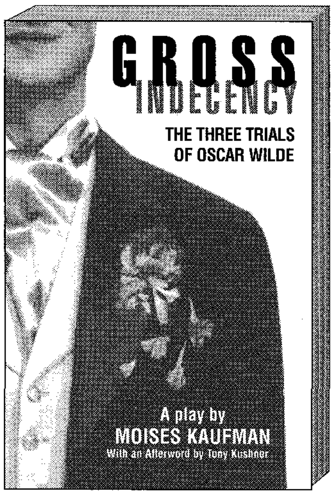

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to detest. "No nightmares allowed on your second honeymoon, babe. What was it?"

"I don't remember," she said, and it was the truth. There were only fragments: Bill with his glasses melted all over his face, and one of the three or four forbidden skip rhymes they had sometimes chanted back in fifth and sixth grade. This one had gone *Hey there, Mary, what's the story* . . . and then something-something-something. She couldn't come up with the rest. She could remember *Jangle-tangle jingle-bingle, I saw your daddy's great big dingle,* but she couldn't remember the one about Mary.

Mary helps the Florida sick, she thought, with no idea of what the thought meant, and just then there was a beep as the pilot turned the seat-belt light on. They had started their final descent. *Let the wild rumpus start,* she thought, and tightened her belt.

"You really don't remember?" he asked, tightening his own. The little jet ran through a cloud filled with bumps, one of the pilots in the cockpit made a minor adjustment, and the ride smoothed out again. "Because usually, just after you wake up, you can still remember. Even the bad ones."

"I remember Sister Annunciata, from Our Lady of Angels. Sentence Time."

"Now, *that's* a nightmare."

Ten minutes later the landing gear came down with a whine and a thump. Five minutes after that they landed.

"They were supposed to bring the car right out to the plane," Bill said, already starting up the Type A shit. This she didn't like, but at least she didn't detest it the way she detested the plummy laugh and his repertoire of patronizing looks. "I hope there hasn't been a hitch."

There hasn't been, she thought, and the feeling swept over her full force. *I'm going to see it out the window on my side in just a second or two. It's your total Florida vacation car, a great big white goddam Cadillac, or maybe it's a Lincoln—*

And, yes, here it came, proving what? Well, she supposed, it proved that sometimes when you had déjà vu what you thought was going to happen next really did happen next. It wasn't a Caddy or a Lincoln after all, but a

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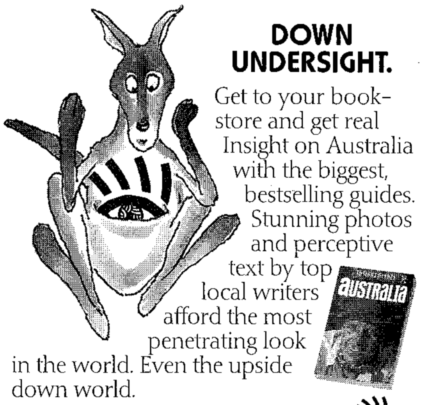

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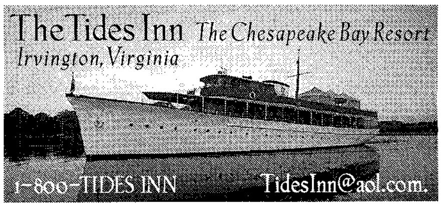

Crown Victoria—what the gangsters in a Martin Scorsese film would no doubt call a Crown Vic.

"Whoo," she said as he helped her down the steps and off the plane. The hot sun made her feel dizzy.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, really. I've got déjà vu. Left over from my dream, I guess. We've been here before, that kind of thing."

"It's being in a strange place, that's all," he said, and kissed her cheek. "Come on, let the wild rumpus start."

They went to the car. Bill showed his driver's license to the young woman who had driven it out. Carol saw him check out the hem of her skirt, then sign the paper on her clipboard.

She's going to drop it, Carol thought. The feeling was now so strong it was like being on an amusement-park ride that goes just a little too fast; all at once you realize you're edging out of the Land of Fun and into the Kingdom of Nausea. *She'll drop it, and Bill will say "Whoopsy-daisy" and pick it up for her, get an even closer look at her legs.*

But the Hertz woman didn't drop her clipboard. A white courtesy van had appeared, to take her back to the Butler Aviation terminal. She gave Bill a final smile—Carol she had ignored completely—and opened the front passenger door. She stepped up, then slipped. "Whoopsy-daisy, don't be crazy," Bill said, and took her elbow, steadying her. She gave him a smile, he gave her well-turned legs a goodbye look, and Carol stood by the growing pile of their luggage and thought, *Hey there, Mary . . .*

"Mrs. Shelton?" It was the co-pilot. He had the last bag, the case with Bill's laptop inside it, and he looked concerned. "Are you all right? You're very pale."

Bill heard and turned away from the departing white van, his face worried. If her strongest feelings about Bill were her only feelings about Bill, now that they were twenty-five years on, she would have left him when she found out about the secretary, a Clairol blonde too young to remember the Clairol slogan that went "If I have only one life to live," etc., etc. But there were other feelings. There was love, for instance. Still love. A kind that girls in Catholic-school uniforms didn't suspect, a weedy species too tough to die.

Besides, it wasn't just love that held people together. Secrets held them, and common history, and the price you paid.

"Carol?" he asked her. "Babe? All right?"

She thought about telling him no, she wasn't all right, she was drowning, but then she managed to smile and said, "It's the heat, that's all. I feel a little groggy. Get me in the car and crank up the air-conditioning. I'll be fine."

Bill took her by the elbow (*Bet you're not checking out my legs, though,* Carol thought. *You know where they go, don't you?*) and led her toward the Crown Vic as if she were a very old lady. By the time the door was closed and cool air was pumping over her face, she actually had started to feel a little better.

If the feeling comes back, I'll tell him, Carol thought. *I'll have to. It's just too strong. Not normal.*

Well, déjà vu was never normal, she

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supposed—it was something that was part dream, part chemistry, and (she was sure she'd read this, maybe in a doctor's office somewhere while waiting for her gynecologist to go prospecting up her fifty-two-year-old twat) part the result of an electrical misfire in the brain, causing new experience to be identified as old data. A temporary hole in the pipes, hot water and cold water mingling. She closed her eyes and prayed for it to go away.

Oh, Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

Please ("Oh puh-lease," they used to say), not back to parochial school. This was supposed to be a vacation, not—

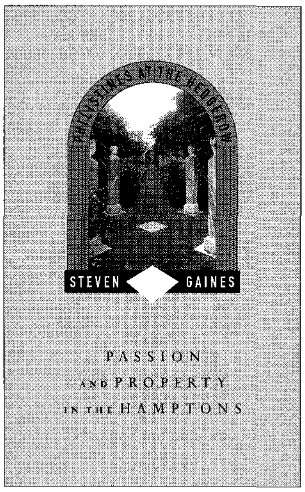
Floyd, what's that over there? Oh shit! Oh SHIT!

Who was Floyd? The only Floyd Bill knew was Floyd Dorning (or maybe it was Darling), the kid he'd run the snack bar with, the one who'd run off to New York with his girlfriend. Carol couldn't remember when Bill had told her about that kid, but she knew he had.

Just quit it, girl. There's nothing here for you. Slam the door on the whole train of thought.

And that worked. There was a final whisper—*what's the story*—and then she was just Carol Shelton, on her way to Captiva Island, on her way to Palm House with her husband the renowned software designer, on their way to the beaches and those rum drinks with the little paper umbrellas sticking out of them.

THEY passed a Publix market. They passed an old black man minding a roadside fruit stand—he made her think of actors from the thirties and movies you saw on the American Movie Channel, an old yassuh-boss type of guy wearing bib overalls and a straw hat with a round crown. Bill made small talk, and she made it right back at him. She was faintly amazed that the little girl who had worn a Mary medallion every day from ten to sixteen had become this woman in the Donna Karan dress—that the desperate couple in that Revere apartment were these middle-aged rich folks rolling down a lush aisle of palms—but she was and they were. Once in those Revere days he had come home drunk and she had hit him and drawn blood from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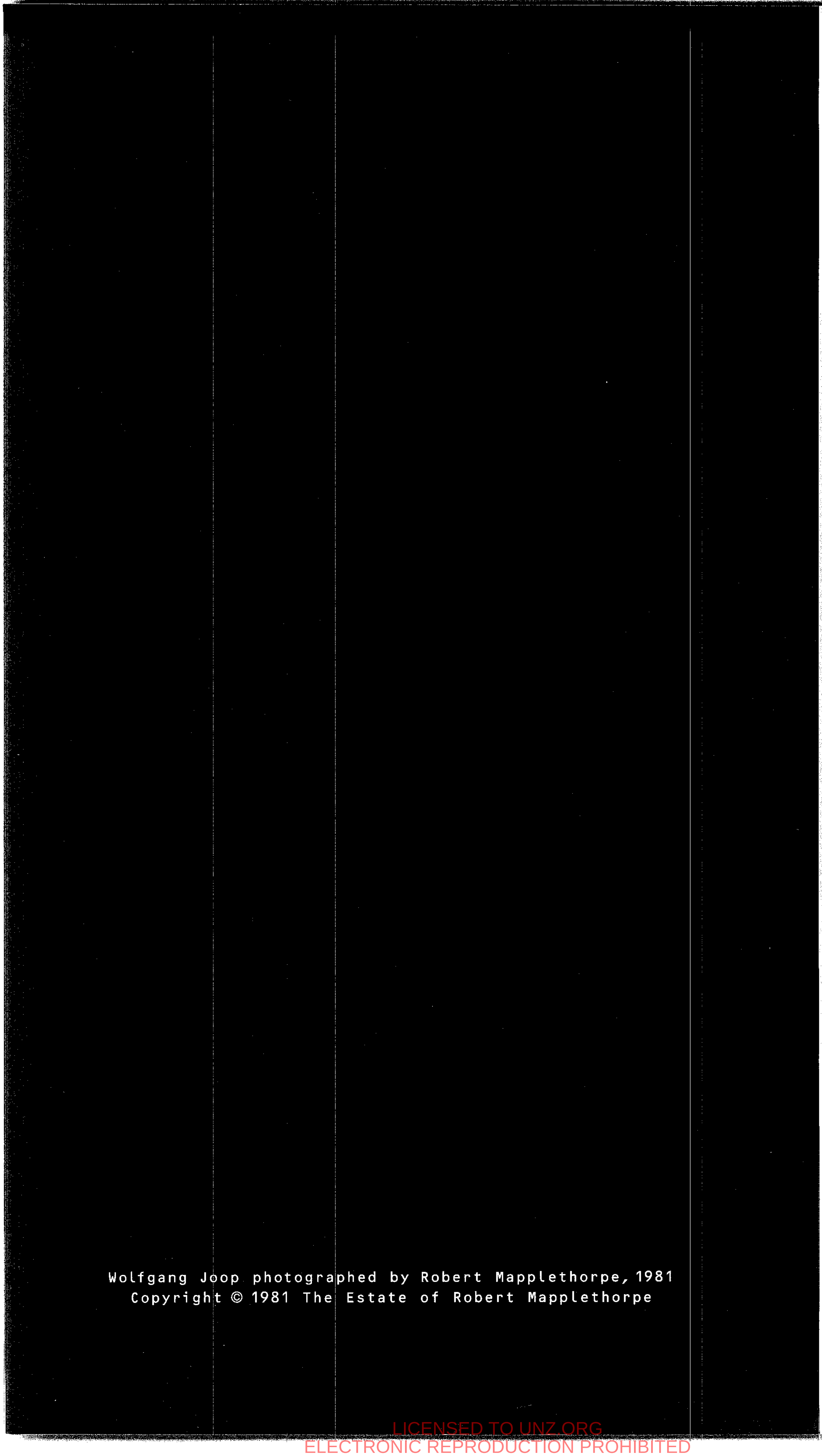

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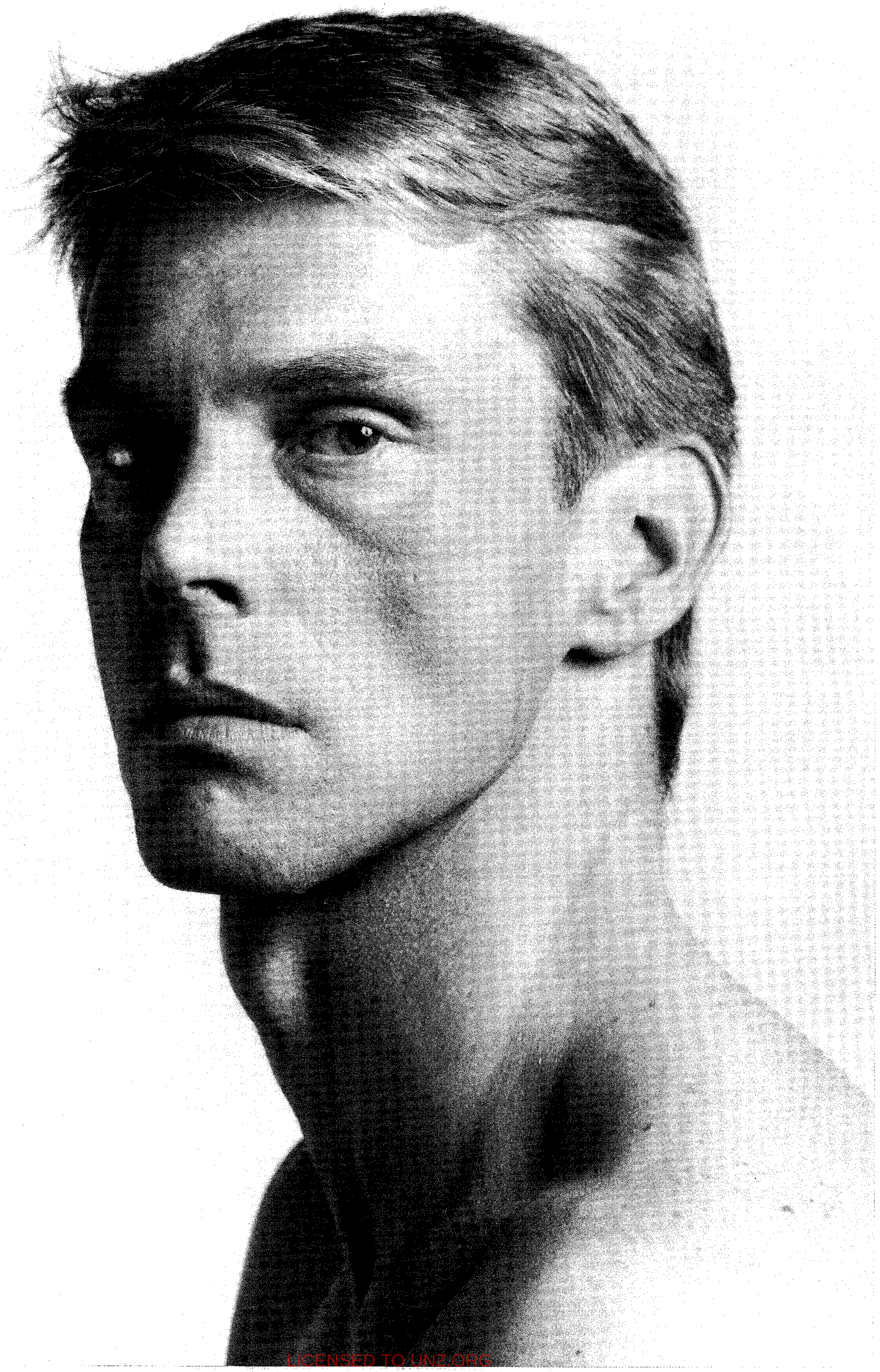


JOOP!

below his eye. Once she had been in fear of Hell, had lain half-drugged in steel stirrups, thinking, *I'm damned, I've come to damnation. A million years, and that's only the first tick of the clock.*

They stopped at the causeway tollbooth and Carol thought, *The toll-taker has a strawberry birthmark on the left side of his forehead, all mixed in with his eyebrow.*

There was no mark—the toll-taker was just an ordinary guy in his late forties or early fifties, iron-gray hair in a buzz cut, horn-rimmed specs, the kind of guy who says, "Y'all have a nahce tahm, okai?"—but the feeling began to come back, and Carol realized that now the things she thought she knew were things she really did know, at first not all of them, but then, by the time they neared the little market on the right side of Route 41, it was almost everything.

The market's called Corson's and there's a little girl out front, Carol thought. *She's wearing a red pinafore. She's got a doll, a dirty old yellow-haired thing, that she's left on the store steps so she can look at a dog in the back of a station wagon.*

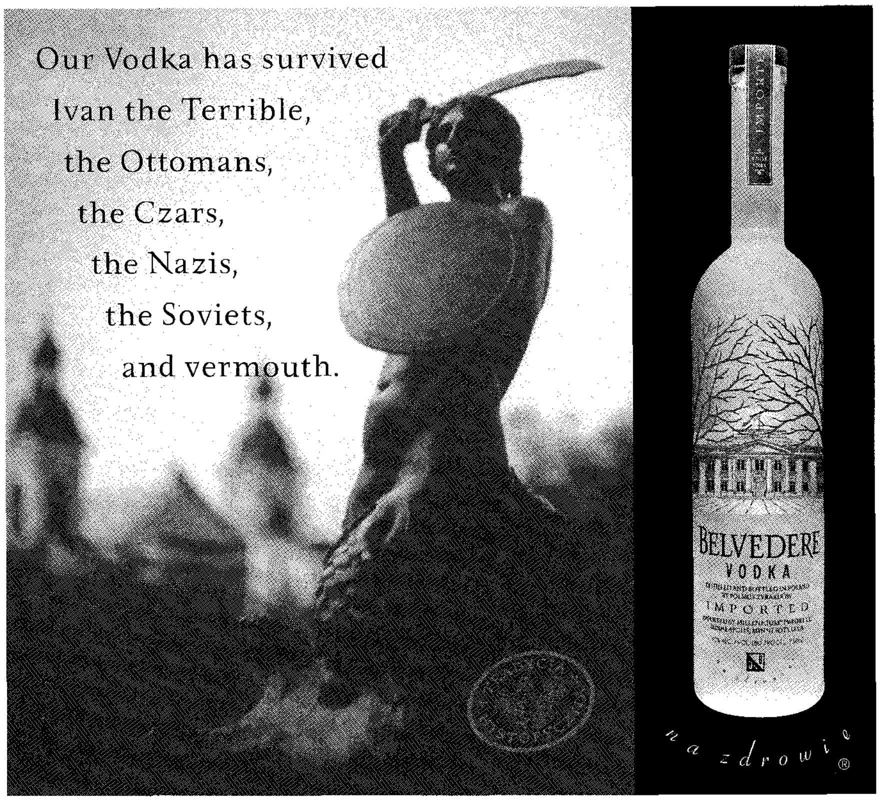
The name of the market turned out to be Carson's, not Corson's, but everything else was the same. As the white Crown Vic passed, the little girl in the red dress turned her solemn face in Carol's direction, a country girl's face, although what a girl from the toolies could be doing here in rich folks' tourist country, her and her dirty yellow-headed doll, Carol didn't know.

Here's where I ask Bill how much farther, only I won't do it. Because I have to break out of this cycle, this groove. I have to.

"How much farther?" she asked him.

He says there's only one road, we can't get lost. He says he promises me we'll get to the Palm House with no problem. And, by the way, who's Floyd?

Bill's eyebrow went up. The dimple beside his mouth appeared. "Once you get over the causeway and onto Sanibel Island, there's only one road," he said. Carol barely heard him. He was still talking about the road, her husband who had spent a dirty weekend in bed with his secretary two years ago, risking all they had done and all they had made, Bill doing that with his other face on, being the Bill Carol's mother had warned would break her heart. And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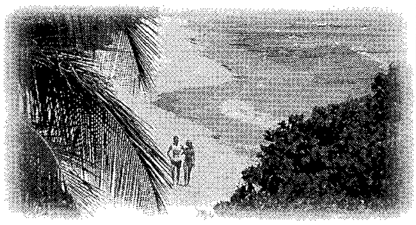

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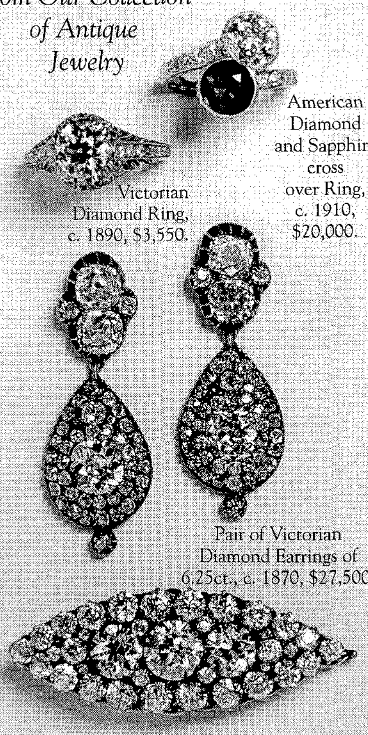
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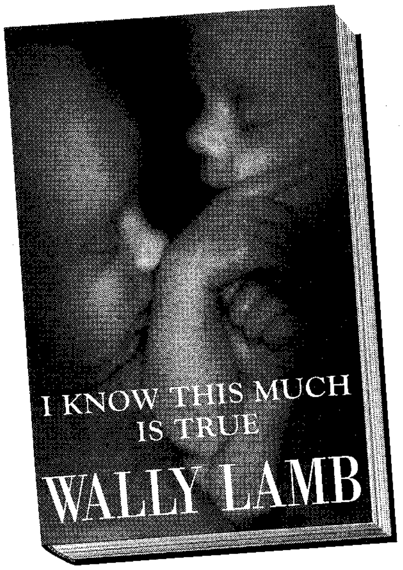

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later Bill trying to tell her he hadn't been able to help himself, her wanting to scream, *I once murdered a child for you, the potential of a child, anyway. How high is that price? And is this what I get in return? To reach my fifties and find out that my husband had to get into some Clairol girl's pants?*

Tell him! she shrieked. *Make him pull over and stop, make him do anything that will break you free—change one thing, change everything! You can do it—if you could put your feet up in those stirrups, you can do anything!*

But she could do nothing, and it all began to tick by faster. The two overfed crows lifted off from their splatter of lunch. Her husband asked why she was sitting that way, was it a cramp, her saying, Yes, yes, a cramp in her back but it was easing. Her mouth quacked on about déjà vu just as if she weren't drowning in it, and the Crown Vic moved forward like one of those sadistic Dodgem cars at Revere Beach. Here came Palmdale Motors on the right. And on the left? Some kind of sign for the local community theatre, a production of "Naughty Marietta."

No, it's Mary, not Marietta. Mary, mother of Jesus, Mary, mother of God, she's got her hands out. . . .

Carol bent all her will toward telling her husband what was happening, because the right Bill was behind the wheel, the right Bill could still hear her. Being heard was what married love was all about.

Nothing came out. In her mind Gram said, "All the hard days are coming." In her mind a voice asked Floyd what was over there, then said, "Oh shit," then *screamed* "Oh shit!"

She looked at the speedometer and saw it was calibrated not in miles an hour but thousands of feet: they were at twenty-eight thousand. Bill was telling her that she shouldn't have slept on the plane and she was agreeing.

There was a pink house coming up, little more than a bungalow, fringed with palm trees that looked like the ones you saw in the Second World War movies, fronds framing incoming Learjets with their machine guns blazing—

Blazing. Burning hot. All at once the magazine he's holding turns into a torch. Holy Mary, mother of God, hey there, Mary, what's the story—

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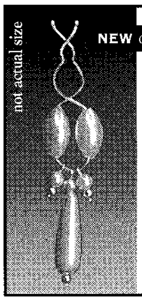

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They passed the house. The old man sat on the porch and watched them go by. The lenses of his rimless glasses glinted in the sun. Bill's hand established a beachhead on her hip. He said something about how they might pause to refresh themselves between the doffing of her dress and the donning of her shorts and she agreed, although they were never going to get to Palm House. They were going to go down this road and down this road, they were for the white Crown Vic and the white Crown Vic was for them, forever and ever amen.

The next billboard would say "Palm House 2 Mi." Beyond it was the one saying that Mother of Mercy Charities helped the Florida sick. Would they help her?

Now that it was too late she was beginning to understand. Beginning to see the light the way she could see the subtropical sun sparkling off the water on their left. Wondering how many wrongs she had done in her life, how many sins if you liked that word, God knew her parents and her Gram certainly had, sin this and sin that and wear the medallion between those growing things the boys look at. And years later she had lain in bed with her new husband on hot summer nights, knowing a decision had to be made, knowing the clock was ticking, the cigarette butt was smoldering, and she remembered making the decision, not telling him out loud because about some things you could be silent.

Her head itched. She scratched it. Black flecks came swirling down past her face. On the Crown Vic's instrument panel the speedometer froze at sixteen thousand feet and then blew out, but Bill appeared not to notice.

Here came a mailbox with a Grateful Dead sticker pasted on the front; here came a little black dog with its head down, trotting busily, and God how her head itched, black flakes drifting in the air like fallout and Mother Teresa's face looking out of one of them.

"Mother of Mary Charities Help the Florida Hungry—Won't *You* Help *Us*?"

Floyd. What's that over there? Oh shit.

She has time to see something big. And to read the word "Delta."

"Bill? *Bill*?"

His reply, clear enough but nevertheless coming from around the rim of

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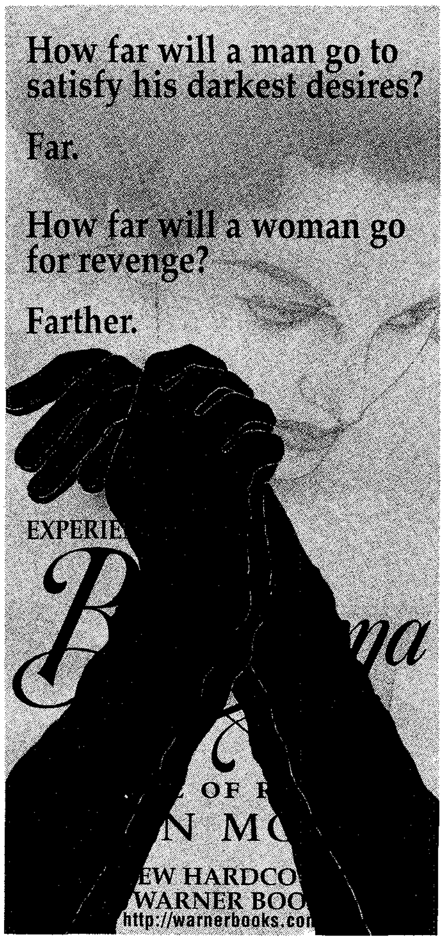

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TAKE THE AUTHOR TO LUNCH 1 PM
M. Stevens

the universe: “Christ, honey, what’s in your *hair*?”

She plucked the charred remnant of Mother Teresa’s face from her lap and held it out to him, the older version of the man she had married, the secretary-fucking man she had married, the man who had nonetheless rescued her from people who thought that you could live forever in paradise if you only lit enough candles and wore the blue blazer and stuck to the approved skipping rhymes. Lying there with this man one hot summer night while the drug deals went on upstairs and Iron Butterfly sang “In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida” for the nine-billionth time, she had asked what he thought you got, you know, after. When your part in the show is over. He had taken her in his arms and held her, down the beach she had heard the jangle-jingle of the midway and the bang of the Dodgem cars and Bill—

Bill’s glasses were melted to his face. One eye bulged out of its socket. His mouth was a bloodhole. In the trees a bird was crying, a bird was *screaming*, and Carol began to scream with it, holding out the charred fragment of paper with Mother Teresa’s picture on it, screaming, watching as his cheeks turned black and his forehead swarmed and his neck split open like a poisoned goiter, screaming, she was screaming, somewhere Iron Butterfly was singing “In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida” and she was screaming.

“CAROL?” It was Bill’s voice, from a thousand miles away. His hand was on her, but it was concern in his touch rather than lust.

She opened her eyes and looked around the sun-brilliant cabin of the Lear 35, and for a moment she understood everything—in the way one understands the tremendous import of a dream upon the first moment of waking. She remembered asking him what he believed you got, you know, *after*, and he had said you probably got what you’d always thought you *would* get, that if Jerry Lee Lewis thought he was going to Hell for playing boogie-woogie, that’s exactly where he’d go. Heaven, Hell, or Grand Rapids, it was your choice—or the choice of those who had taught you what to believe. It was the human mind’s final great service: the perception of eternity in the place where you’d always expected to spend it.

“Carol? You O.K., babe?” In one hand was the magazine he’d been reading, a *Newsweek* with Mother Teresa on the cover. “SAINTHOOD NOW?” it said in white.

Looking around wildly at the cabin, she was thinking, *It happens at sixteen thousand feet. I have to tell them, I have to warn them.*

But it was fading, all of it, the way those feelings always did. They went like dreams, or cotton candy turning into a sweet mist just above your tongue.

“Landing? Already?” She felt wide awake, but her voice sounded thick and muzzy.

“It’s fast, huh?” he said, sounding pleased, as if he’d flown it himself instead of paying for it. “Floyd says we’ll be on the ground in—”

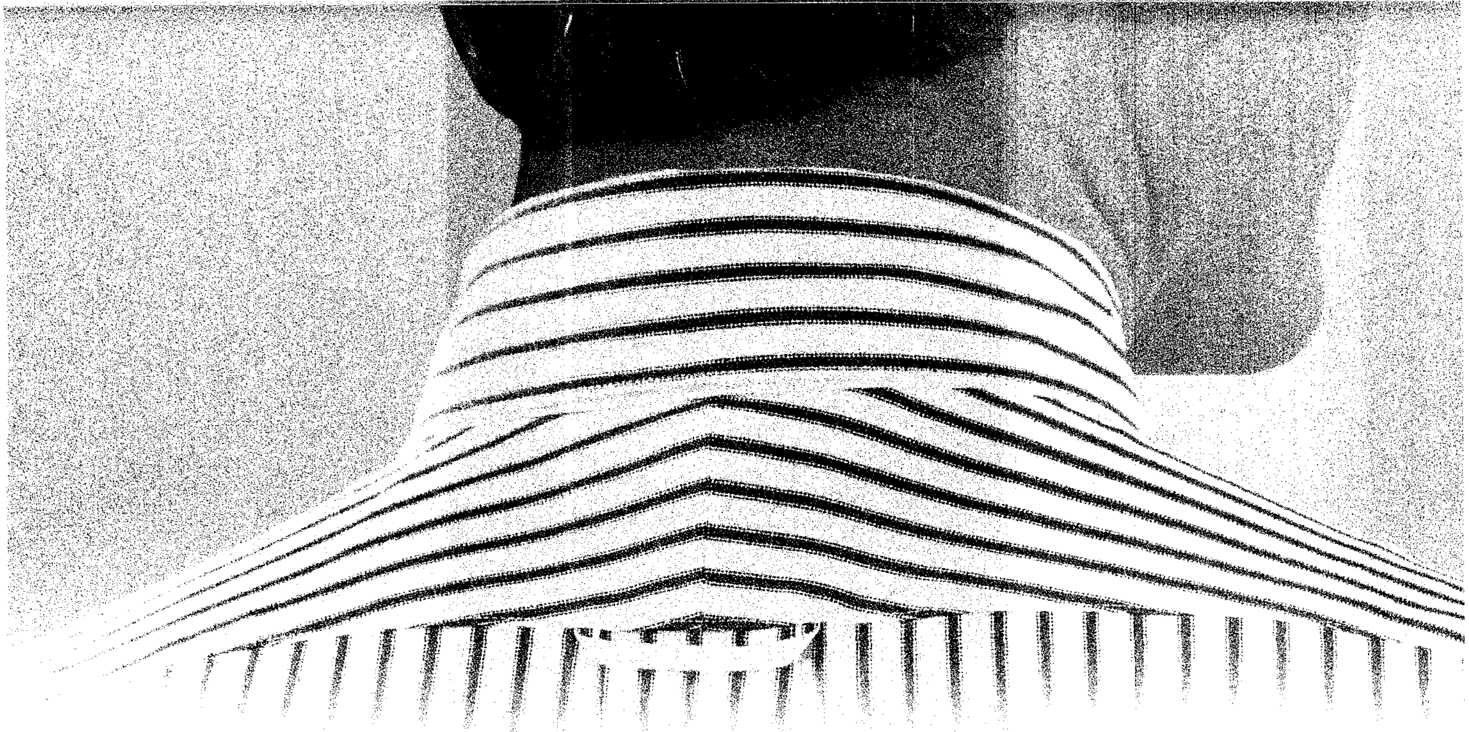
“Who?” she asked. The cabin of the little plane was warm but her fingers were cold. “Who?”

“Floyd. You know, the *pilot*.” He pointed his thumb toward the cockpit’s left-hand seat. They were descending into a scrim of clouds. The plane began to shake. “He says we’ll be on the ground in Fort Myers in twenty minutes. You took a hell of a jump, girl. And before that you were moaning.”

Carol opened her mouth to say it was that feeling, the one you could only say what it was in French, something *vu* or *vous*, but it was fading and all she said was “I had a nightmare.”

There was a beep as Floyd the pilot switched the seat-belt light on. Carol turned her head. Somewhere below, waiting for them now and forever, was a white car from Hertz, a gangster car, the kind the characters in a Martin Scorsese movie would probably call a Crown Vic. She looked at the cover of the news magazine, at the face of Mother Teresa, and all at once she remembered skipping rope behind Our Lady of Angels, skipping to one of the forbidden rhymes, skipping to the one that went *Hey there, Mary, what’s the story, save my ass from Purgatory.*

All the hard days are coming, her Gram had said. She had pressed the medal into Carol’s palm, wrapped the chain around her fingers. *The hard days are coming.* ♦



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So, the shirt gives diagonally – in the direction of the fabric's own natural "give."

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While we were changing our shirt...

We've also made the buttonholes on the sleeves *horizontal*, instead of the usual vertical holes. A small touch – but again, a sign of fine tailoring.

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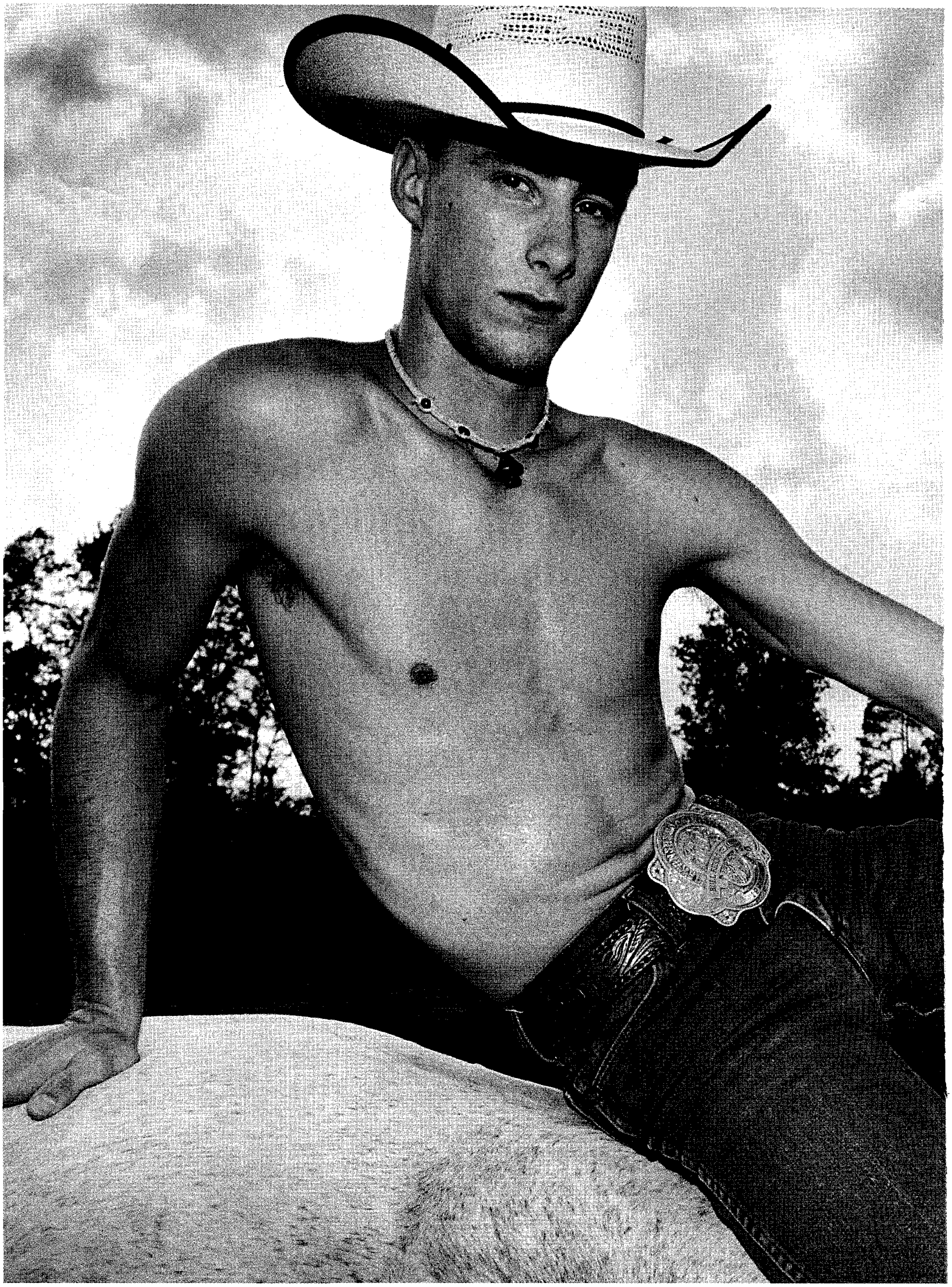
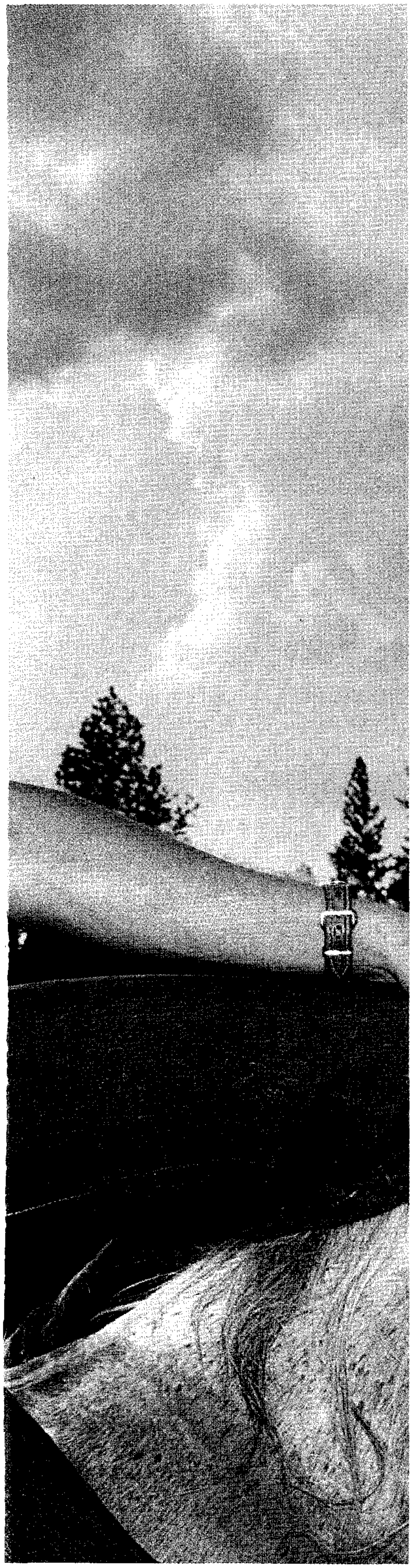


A buckle—a trophy for cowboys and buckle bunnies. Photograph from Elaine Constantine's series on Arkansas rodeos. Title courtesy of Ton



Russell's song "The Sky Above, the Mud Below."

FICTION

THE MUD BELOW

Is it possible that sitting on top of a wild animal—this crazy-ass elation, this adrenaline buzz—actually satisfies some kind of need?

BY ANNIE PROULX

OKLAHOMA

RODEO night in a hot little Okie town, and Diamond Felts was inside a metal chute a long way from the scratch on Wyoming dirt he named as home, sitting on the back of Bull 82N, a loose-skinned brindle-Brahma cross identified in the program as Little Kisses. There was a sultry feeling of weather. He kept his butt cocked to one side, his feet up on the chute rails so the bull couldn't grind his leg, brad him up, so if it thrashed he could get over the top in a hurry. The time came closer, and he slapped his face forcefully, bringing the adrenaline roses up on his cheeks, glanced down at his pullers, and said, "I guess." Rito, neck gleaming with sweat, caught the free end of the bull rope with a metal hook, brought it delicately to his hand from under the bull's belly, climbed up the rails, ready to pull it taut.

"Aw, this's a sumbuck," he said. "Give you the sample card."

Diamond took the end, made his wrap, brought the rope around the back of his hand and over the palm a second time, wove it between his third and fourth fingers, pounded the rosined glove fingers down over it and into his palm. He laid the tail of the rope across the bull's back and looped the excess, but it wasn't right—everything had gone a little slack. He undid the wrap and started over, making the loop smaller, waiting while they pulled again. In the arena, a clown fired a pink cannon, the fizzing discharge diminished by a deep stir of thunder from the south, Texas T-storm on the roll.

Night performances had their own hot charge—the glare, the stiff-legged parade of cowboy dolls in sparkle-fringed chaps, the spotlight that bucked over the squinting contestants and the half-roostered crowd. They were at the end of the night now. The bull beneath him breathed, shifted roughly.

In the first go-round he'd drawn a bull he knew and got a good scald on him. He'd been in a slump for weeks, wire stretched tight, but things were turning back his way. He'd come off that animal in a flying dismount, sparked a little clapping that quickly died; the watchers knew as well as he that if he burst into flames and sang an operatic aria after the whistle it would make no damn difference.

He drew O.K. bulls and rode them in the next rounds, scores in the high seventies, fixed his eyes on the outside shoulder of the welly bull that tried to drop him, then at the short-go draw he pulled Kisses, rank and salty, big as a boxcar of coal. On that one, all you could do was your best and hope for a little sweet luck; if you got the luck, he was money.

The announcer's voice rattled in the speakers above the enclosed arena. "Now folks, it ain't the Constitution or the Bill a Rights that made this a great country. It was God who created the mountains and plains and the evenin sunset and put us here and let us look at them. Amen and God bless the Markin flag. And right now we got a bull rider from Redsled, Wyomin, twenty-three-year-old Diamond Felts, who might be wonderin if he'll ever see that beautiful scenery again. Folks, Diamond Felts weighs one hundred and thirty pounds. Little Kisses weighs two thousand ten pounds. He is a big, big bull, and he is thirty-eight and one, last year's Dodge City Bull Riders' choice. Only one man has stayed on this big bad bull's back for eight seconds, and that was Marty Casebolt, at Reno, and you better believe that man got all the money. Will he be rode tonight? Folks, we're goin a find out in just a minute, soon as our cowboy's ready. And listen at that rain, folks, let's give thanks we're in a enclosed arena or it would be deep mud below."

Diamond glanced back at the flank man, moved up on his rope, nodded, jerking his head up and down rapidly. "Let's go, let's go."

The chute gate swung open and the bull squatted, leaped into the waiting silence, and, a paroxysm of twists, belly rolls and spins, skipping, bucking, and whirling, powerful drop, gave him the whole menu.

REDSLED, WYOMING

DIAMOND FELTS, a constellation of moles on his left cheek, dark hair cropped to the skull, was more than good-looking when cleaned up and combed, in fresh shirt and his neckerchief printed with blue stars, but for most of his life he had not known it. Five feet three, rapping, tapping, nail-biting, he radiated unease. Diamond was a virgin at eighteen—not many of either sex in his senior class in that condition—and his tries at changing the situation went wrong and, as far as his despairing thought carried him, would always go wrong in the forest of tall girls. There were small women out there, but in the privacy of his head it was the six-footers he mounted.

All his life, he had heard himself called Half-Pint, Baby Boy, Shorty, Kid, Tiny, Little Guy, Sawed-Off. His mother never let up, always had the needle ready, even the time when she had come into the upstairs hall and caught him stepping naked from the bathroom she said, "Well, at least you didn't get shortchanged that way, did you?"

In the spring of his final year of school he drummed his fingers on Wallace Winter's pickup, listening to its swan-necked owner pump up a story, trying for the laugh, when a knothead they knew only as Leecil—God save the one who said Lucille—walked up and said, "Either one a you want a work this weekend? The old man's fixin a brand, and he's short-handed." He winked his dime-size eyes. His blunt face was corrugated with plum-colored acne and among the angry wellings grew a few blond whiskers. Diamond couldn't see how he shaved without bleeding to death. The smell of livestock was strong.

"He sure picked the wrong weekend," said Wallace. "Basketball game, parties, fucking, drinking, drugs, car wrecks, cops, food poisoning, fights. Didn't you tell him?"

"He didn't ask me. Tolt me get some guys. Anyway, it's good weather now. Stormt the weekend for a month." Leecil spit.

Wallace pretended serious consideration. "Scratch the weekend, I guess we get paid." He winked at Diamond, who grimaced to tell him that Leecil was not one to be teased.

"Yeah, six per, you guys. Me and my brothers got a work for nothin for the ranch. Anyway, we give or take quit at suppertime, so you can still do your stuff. Party, whatever." He wasn't going to any town blowout.

"I never did ranch work," Diamond said. "My mama grew up on a ranch and hated it. Only took us up there once, and I bet we didn't stay an hour," remembering an expanse of hoof-churned mud, his grandfather turning away, a muscular, sweaty Uncle John in chaps and filthy hat swatting him on the butt and saying something to his mother that made her mad.

"Don't matter. It's just work. Git the calves into the chute, brand em, fix em, vaccinate em, git em out."

"Fix em," said Diamond.

Leecil made an eloquent gesture at his crotch.

"It could be weirdly interesting," said Wallace. "I got something that will make it weirdly interesting."

"You don't want a git ironed out too much, have to lay down in the mud," said Leecil severely.

"No,"said Wallace. "I fucking don't want to do that. O.K., I'm in. What the hell."

Diamond nodded.

Leecil cracked his mouthful of perfect teeth. "Know where our place is at? There's a bunch of different turnoffs. Here's how you go," and he drew a complicated map on the back of a returned quiz, red-marked F. That solved one puzzle; Leecil's last name was Bewd. Wallace looked at Diamond. The Bewd tribe, scattered from Fan Creek to Pine Bluffs, filled a double-X space in the local pantheon of troublemakers.

"7 A.M.," said Leecil.

THE good weather washed out. The weekend was a windy, overcast cacophony of bawling, manure-caked animals, mud, dirt, lifting, punching the needle, the stink of burning hair that he thought would never get out of his nose. Two crotch scratchers from school showed up; Diamond had seen them around, but he did not know them and thought of them as losers for no reason but that they were inarticulate and lived out on dirt-road ranches—friends of Leecil. Como Bewd, a grizzled man wearing a kidney belt, pointed this way and that as Leecil and his brothers worked the calves from pasture to corral to holding pen to chute and the yellow-hot electric branding iron to cutting table, where the ranch hand Lovis bent forward with his knife and with the other hand pulled the skin of the scrotum tight over one testicle and made a long outside cut through skin and membrane, yanked out the hot balls, dropped them into a bucket, and waited for the next calf. The dogs sniffed around, the omnipresent flies razzed and turmoiled, three saddled horses shifted from leg to leg under a tree and occasionally nickered.

Diamond glanced again and again at Como Bewd. The man's forehead showed a fence of zigzag scars like white barbed wire. He caught the stare and winked.

"Looking at my decorations? My brother run over me with his truck when I was your age. Took the skin off from ear to here. I was all clawed up. I was scalloped."

They finished late Sunday afternoon, and Como Bewd counted out their pay carefully and slowly, added an extra five to each pile, said they'd done a pretty fair job, then, to Leecil, said, "How about it?"

"You want a have some fun?" said Leecil to Diamond and Wallace. The others were already walking to a small corral some distance away.

"Like what?" said Wallace.

Diamond had a flash that there was a woman in the corral.

"Bull ridin. Dad's got some good buckin bulls. Our rodeo class come out last month and rode em. Couldn't hardly stay on one of em."

"I'll watch," said Wallace, in his ironic side-of-mouth voice.

Diamond considered rodeo classes

the last resort of concrete heads who couldn't figure out how to hold a basketball. "Oh man," he said. "Bulls. I don't guess so."

Leecil Bewd ran ahead to the corral. There was a side pen and in it were three bulls, two of them pawing dirt. A chute opened into the corral. One of the crotch scratchers was in there already, jumping around, ready to play bullfighter and toll a bull away from a tossed rider.

To Diamond, the bulls looked murderous and wild, but even the ranch hands had a futile go at riding them. Leecil's father, bounced down in three seconds, hit the ground on his behind, the kidney belt riding up his chest.

"Try it," said Leecil, mouth bloody from a face slam, spitting.

"Aw, not me," said Wallace. "I got a life in front of me."

"Yeah," said Diamond. "Yeah, I guess I'll give it a go."

"Atta boy, atta boy," said Como Bewd, and handed him a rosined left glove. "Ever been on a bull?"

"No, sir," said Diamond, no boots, no spurs, no chaps, T-shirted and hatless. Leecil's old man told him to hold his free hand up, not to touch the bull or himself with it, keep his shoulders forward and his chin down, hold on with his feet and legs and left hand, above all not to think, and, when he got bucked off, no matter what was broke, get up quick and run like hell for the fence. He helped him make the wrap, ease down on the animal, said, "Shake your face and get out there," and, grinning, blood-speckled Lovis opened the chute gate, waiting to see the town kid dumped and dive-bombed.

But Diamond stayed on until someone counting eight hit the rail with the length of pipe to signal time. He flew off, landed on his feet, stumbling headlong but not falling in a run for the rails. He hauled himself up, panting from the exertion and the intense nervy rush. He'd been shot out of the cannon. The shock of the violent motion, the lightning shifts of balance, the feeling of power as though he were the bull and not the rider, even the fright, fulfilled some greedy physical hunger in him he hadn't known was there. The experience had been exhilarating and unbearably personal.

"You know what," said Como Bewd. "You might make a bull rider."

MONDAY morning on the school bus, Diamond went for Leecil sitting in the back with one of the crotch scratchers. Leecil touched thumb and forefinger in a circle, winked.

"I need to talk to you. I want to know how to get into it. The bull riding. Rodeo."

"Don't think so," said the crotch scratcher. "First time you git stacked up, you'll yip for mama."

"He won't," said Leecil, and to Diamond, "You bet it ain't no picnic. Don't look for no picnic—you are goin a git tore up."

That night, he told his mother he was going to bull-riding school in California. Kaylee Felts managed a tourist store, High West—Vintage Cowboy Gear, Western Antiques, Spurs, Collectibles. A chain headquartered in Denver. She had told him there was probably a place in the business for him after college, one of the other stores if he wanted to see the world.

"What is this, some kid thing you kept to yourself all this time? No. You're going to college. I worked to bring you boys up in town, get you out of the mud, give you a chance to make something out of yourselves. You're just going to throw everything away to be a rodeo bum?"

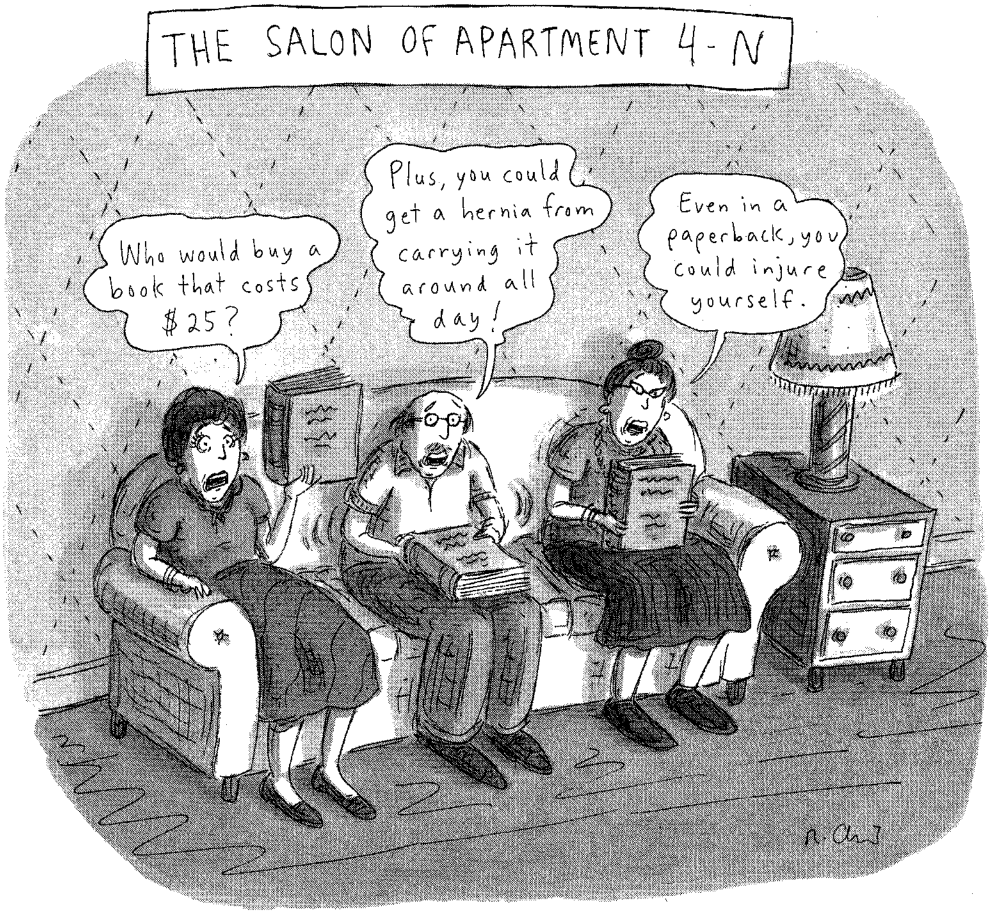
"Well, I'm going to rodeo," he answered. "I'm going to ride bulls."

"Don't you get it?" she said. "Rodeo's for ranch boys who don't have the opportunities you do. The stupidest ones are the bull riders. We get them in the shop every week trying to sell us those pot-metal buckles or their dirty chaps."

"Doing it," he said. It could not be explained.

TEXAS

AT the California bull-riding school, he rode thirty animals in a week, invested in a case of sports tape, watched videos until he fell asleep sitting up. The instructor's tireless nasal voice called, "Push on it, you can't never think you're goin a lose, don't look into the well, find


THE SALON OF APARTMENT 4-N
Who would buy a book that costs $25?
Plus, you could get a hernia from carrying it around all day!
Even in a paperback, you could injure yourself.
R. Chast

your balance point, once you're tapped, get right back into the pocket, don't never quit."

Back in Wyoming, he found a room in Cheyenne, a junk job, bought his permit, and started running the Mountain Circuit. He made his P.R.C.A. ticket in a month, thought he was in sweet clover. Somebody told him it was beginner's luck. He ran into Leecil Bewd at almost every rodeo, got drunk with him twice, and, after a time of red-eye solo driving, always broke, too much month and not enough money, hooked up with him and they travelled together, riding the jumps, covering bulls from one little rodeo to another, eating road dust. He had chosen a rough, bruising life and with it confused philosophies of striving to win and apologizing for it when he did. But there was a dark lightning in his gut now, a feeling of blazing real existence.

It worked pretty well for a year and then Leecil quit. It had been a scorching, dirty afternoon at the Greeley fairgrounds. Leecil squirted water from a gas-station hose over his head and neck, drove with the window cranked down, the dry wind sucking up the moisture immediately. The venomous blue sky threw heat.

"I wasn't packin enough in my shorts today to ride that trash," said Leecil. "Say what, the juice ain't worth the squeeze. Made up my mind while I was rollin in the dirt. I used a think I wanted a rodeo more than anything. But shoot, I gotta say I hate it. I don't got that thing you got, the style, the fuck-it-all-I-love-it thing. I miss the ranch bad. The old man's on my mind. He got some medical problem, can't hardly make his water good, told my brother there's blood in his bull stuff. They're doin tests. And there's Renata. What I'm tryin a say is, I'm cuttin out on you. Anyway, guess what, goin a get married."

"What do you mean? You knock Renata up?" It was all going at speed.

"Aw, yeah. It's O.K."

"Well, shit, Leecil. Won't be much fun now." He was surprised that it was true. He knew he had little talent for friends or affection, stood armored against love, though when it did come down on him later it came like an axe and he was slaughtered by it. "I never had a girl stick with me more than two hours. I don't

AMERICAN SUMMER-1942

TROOP TRAIN

In midsummer of 1942, a month after I graduated from Harvard, I got drafted and sent to Atlantic City for basic training. As a private in the Air Force (it was a branch of the Army back then), I roomed with four other similarly traumatized young men in a blacked-out oceanside suite at the Ritz Hotel, which had been coöpted as a barracks. Here, for three hot summer weeks, we memorized the Articles of War and learned how to stand at attention, how to salute, and, through training films, how to recognize the Japanese "Betty" bomber, the German ME-109 fighter, and the impartial, skulking gonococcus, all at a glance. We also learned how to march. At six in the morning, with the sun gleaming off the sea and our moving shadows lying long across the boardwalk, we marched from the Ritz down to a mess hall in another hotel, fell out and ate, fell in and marched back again. A bit later, among the blocky dozens of other platoons, we marched three miles up the boardwalk (tromp-tromp, sing out, "*Onetwo!*") to a dusty parking lot, did jumping jacks and other calisthenics, fell in and marched sweatily back three miles for chow at the same mess hall. With the country newly at war, no rifles or sidearms or weapons training had yet come our way, but, boy, could we march.

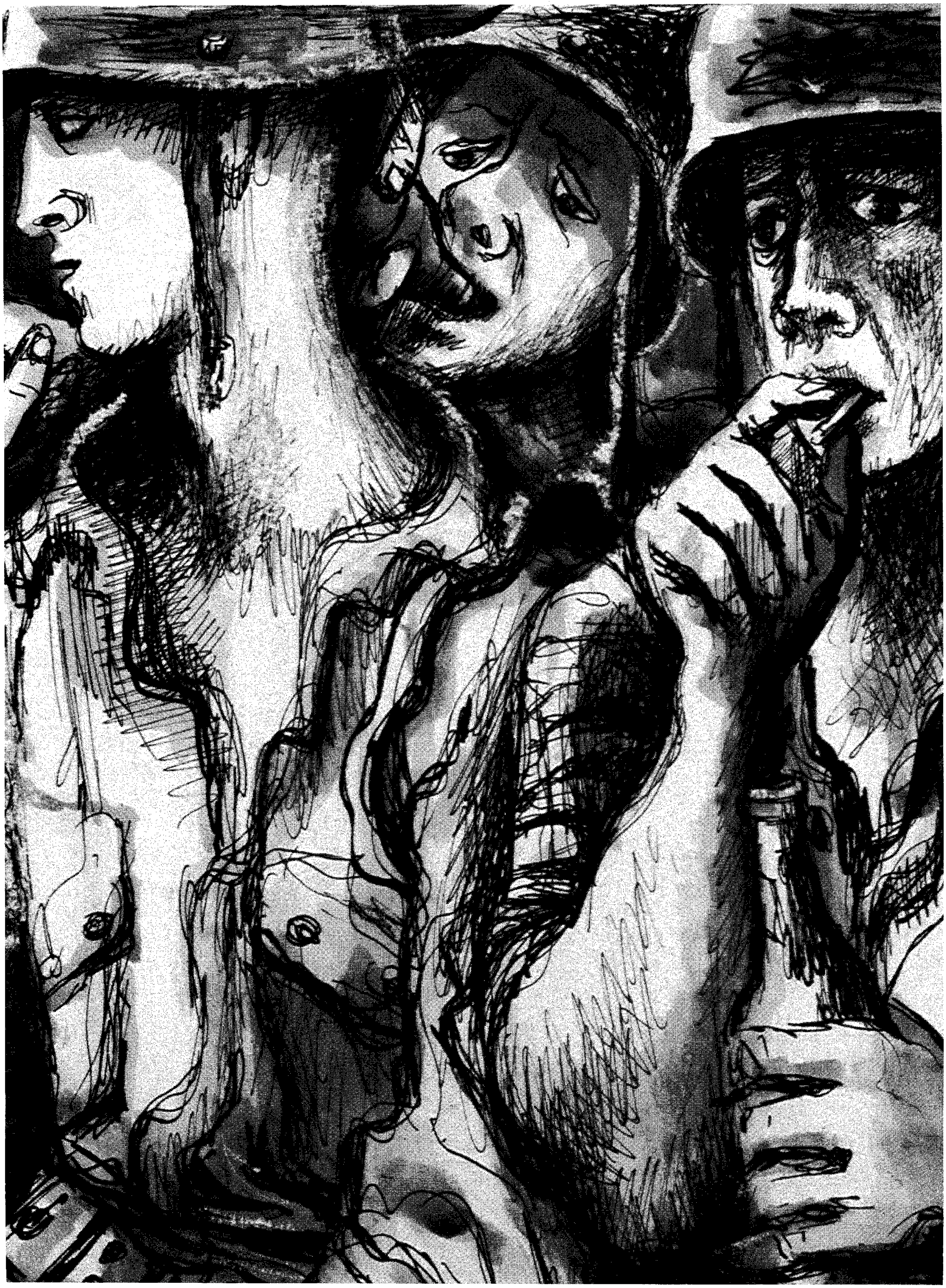
Late in August, one of many hundreds of rumors came true when we packed up and climbed aboard a troop train and began a journey to someplace—no one told us where. Eventually, we would be dropped off, car by car, at unmarked sidings close to the forts or fields where we would begin our technical training. We didn't know anything, not even which side would win this war. All of Europe still belonged to the Nazis, and the early news from a spot called Guadalcanal was grim.

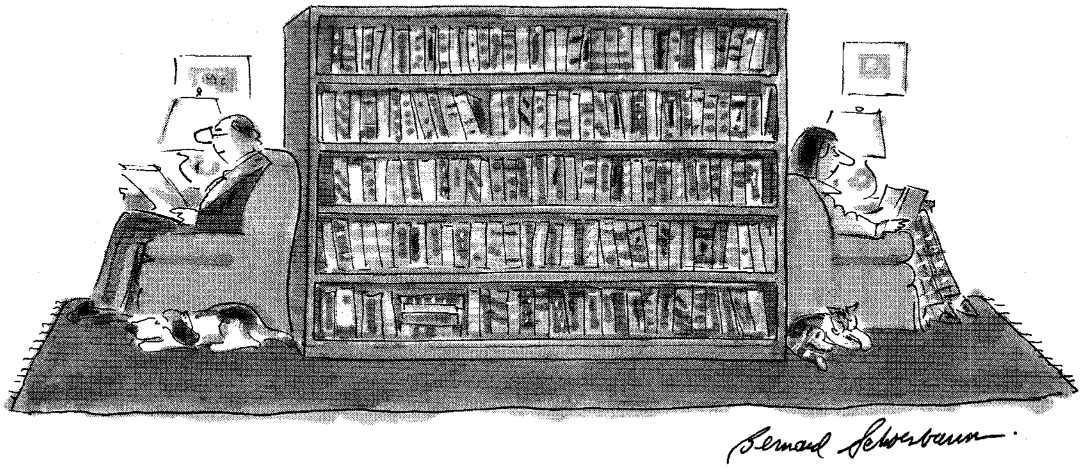
Days on end, stuffed into ancient, sooty Pullman cars, we rolled and clacked westward, while we dozed, played cards, talked, laughed, got depressed, wrote letters, and read endlessly. (I had brought the Modern Library edition of "The Brothers Karamazov" with me, and had chugged along well into the Grand Inquisitor chapter, when a broken drinking fountain interrupted my studies, inundating a heap of blue barracks bags, including mine, in which I had stashed the gloomy Bros. for the moment.) At night, we bunked three to a section, taking turns in the upper berth (a delicious single) or squalidly doubling up, head to foot, in the lower. I still recall waking up in the middle of my first night and slowly comprehending that I was staring at the pale toes of Private Pete Hoffman, a fireman from Jersey City.

On our third day, I drew K.P.—the hated kitchen fatigue, but this time a welcome break in the dull, mysterious journey. In a converted mail car, we served up some kind of stew from big galvanized-metal barrels, ladling it into the mess kits of our fellow-G.I.s, who complained unimaginatively but ate it all up, every scrap. We K.P.s worked late that night, scrubbing away at the massive pots and then sweeping and mopping the ridged, swaying floor. It was after eleven when the mess sergeant said we were done, and then someone rolled back the wide, boxcar-style doors, and the warm night air streamed in around us. With a couple of my companions, I sat down and lit a cigarette and watched Indiana slowly roll away under my dangling, booted feet. We talked a little, I think, yet soon the rumble and creak of our car, the pleasing slither of wheels, and the sidewise-moving dark silhouettes of trees silenced us, yet no one got up and headed off to bed. We had a low moon for company, and the smell of fields and the coolness of the occasional stream or river we passed over (with accompanying bridge-rumble) and the smoothly presented and taken-away details of each small town—a silent station and an empty platform, a light on in somebody's upstairs bedroom, a Purina Chow billboard next to a street lamp, more trees—were hypnotic and lulling. Dozens of trains, it came to me, were at that moment carrying thousands of men like me to someplace new and strange, and eventually to the war itself, but just then, for the first time, I didn't mind at all. I had become a soldier.

—Roger Angell

DETAIL, "UNTITLED (MEN WAITING SMOKING AND DRINKING)," 1943; ESTATE OF PHILIP GUSTON; COURTESY MCKEE GALLERY





know how you get past that two hours," he said.

Leecil looked at him.

After Leecil quit, he moved to Texas, where there was a rodeo every night for a fast driver, red-eyed from staring at pin headlights miles distant, alternately dark and burning as the road rose and fell away.

The second year, he was getting some notice and making money until a day or so before the big Fourth of July weekend. He came off a great ride and landed hard on his feet with his right knee sharply flexed, tore the ligaments and damaged cartilage. He was a fast healer, but it put him out for the summer. When he was off the crutches, bored and limping around on a cane, he thought about Redsled. The doctor said the hot springs there might be a good idea. He picked up a night ride with Tee Dove, a Texas bull rider, the big car slingshot toward a black hump of range, dazzle of morning an hour behind the rim, not a dozen words exchanged.

"It's a bone game," Tee Dove said, and Diamond, thinking he meant injuries, nodded.

REDSLED

For the first time in two years, he sat at his mother's table. She said, "Bless this food, amen, oh boy, I knew you'd be back one of these days. And look at you. Just take a look at you. Like you climbed out of a ditch." She was dolled up. Her hair was long and streaked blond, crimped like Chinese noodles, and her eyelids were iridescent blue.

They ate in silence, forks clicking among the pieces of cucumber and tomato. He disliked cucumber. She got up, clattered small plates with gold rims onto the table, brought out a supermarket lemon-meringue pie, began to cut it with the silver pie server.

"All right," said Diamond, "calf-slobber pie."

Pearl, his ten-year-old brother, let out a bark.

She stopped cutting and fixed him with a stare. "You can talk ugly when you're with your rodeo bums, but when you are home keep your tongue decent."

He looked at her, seeing the cold blame. "I'll pass on that pie."

"I think all of us will after that unforgettable image."

She went out then, some kind of Western-junk meeting at the Redsled Inn, sticking him with the dishes. It was as if he'd never left.

He came down late the next morning. Pearl was sitting at the kitchen table reading a comic book. He was wearing the T-shirt Diamond had sent. It read "Give Blood, Ride Bulls." It was too small.

"Mama's gone to the shop. She said you should eat cereal, not eggs. Eggs have cholesterol. I saw you on TV once. I saw you get bucked off."

Diamond fried two eggs in butter and ate them out of the pan, fried two more. He looked for coffee, but there was only a jar of instant dust.

"I'm going to get a buckle like yours when I'm eighteen," Pearl said. "And I'm not going to get bucked off because I'll hold on with the grip of death. Like this." And he made a white-knuckled fist.

"This ain't a terrific buckle."

"I'm going to tell Mama you said 'ain't.' "

"For Christ's sake, that's how everybody talks. Except for one old booger steer roper. You want an egg?"

"I hate eggs. They aren't good for you. Ain't good for you. How does the old booger talk? Does he say 'calf-slobber pie'?"

"Why do you think she buys eggs if nobody's supposed to eat them? The old booger's religious. Always reading pamphlets about Jesus. Actually he's not old. He's no older than me. He's younger than me. He don't never say 'ain't.' He don't say 'shit' or 'fuck' or 'cunt' or 'prick' or 'goddam.' He says 'Good Lord' when he's pissed off or gets slammed up the side of his head."

Pearl laughed immoderately, excited by the forbidden words and low-down grammar spoken in their mother's kitchen.

"Rodeo's full of Jesus freaks. And double and triple sets of brothers. All kinds of Texas cousins. There's some fucking strange guys in it. It's like a magic show sometimes, with prayers and jujus and crosses and amulets and superstitions. Anybody does anything good, makes a good ride, it's not them, it's their mystical-power connection helping them out." He yawned, began to rub the bad knee. "So, you're going to hold on tight and not get bucked off?"

"Yeah. Really tight."

"I'll have to remember to try that," said Diamond.

On Thursday night after supper, she said to Diamond, "I've got something I want you to see. We'll just take us a little ride."

"Can I come?" said Pearl.

"No. This is something I want your brother to see. Watch TV. We'll be back in an hour."

"What is it," said Diamond, remembering the dark smear on the street she had brought him to years before. She had pointed, said, he didn't look both ways. He knew it would be something like that. He should not have come back.

She drove past the scrap-metal pile and the bentonite plant and, at the edge of town, crossed the railroad tracks where the road turned into rough dirt cutting through prairie. Under a yellow sunset stood several low metal buildings. The windows reflected the bright honey-colored west.

She said, "Hondo Gunsch? You know that name?"

"No." But he had heard it somewhere.

"Here," she said, pulling up in front of the largest building. Thousands of insects barely larger than dust motes floated in the luteous air. She walked quickly, he followed, dotting along.

"Hello," she called into the dark hallway. A light snapped on. A man in a white shirt came through a door, his pocket stiffened with a piece of plastic to hold his ballpoint pens. He had a black hat, brim bent like the wings of a crow, and a face crowded with freckles, spectacles, beard, and mustache.

"Hey there, Kaylee." The man looked at her as though she were hot buttered toast.

"This is Shorty, wants to be a rodeo star. Shorty, this is Kerry Moore."

Diamond shook the man's hand. It was an exchange of hostilities.

"Hondo's out in the tack room," said the man, looking at her. He laughed. "Always in the tack room. He'd sleep there if we let him. Come on out here."

He opened a door into a large, square room at the end of the stables. The last light fell through high windows, gilding bridles, and reins hanging on the wall. A small refrigerator hummed behind a desk, and on the wall above it Diamond saw a framed magazine cover, *Boots 'n Bronks*, August, 1960, showing a saddle-bronc rider, straight, square, and tucked on a high-twisted horse, spurs raked all the way up to the cantle, his outflung arm in front of him. His hat was gone and his mouth open in a crazy smile. A banner read "GUNSCH TAKES CHEYENNE SB CROWN." The horse's back was humped, his nose pointed down, hind legs straight in a powerful jump and five feet of daylight between the descending front hooves and the ground.

In the middle of the room, an elderly man worked leather cream into a saddle; he wore a straw hat with the brim rolled high on the sides. There was something wrong in the set of the shoulders, the forward slope of his torso from the hips. The room smelled of apples, and Diamond saw a basket of them on the floor.

"Hondo, we got visitors." The man looked past them at nothing, revealing a flat bulb of a crushed nose, a dished cheekbone, the great dent above the left eye, which seemed sightless. His mouth was pursed with concentration. There was a pack of cigarettes in his shirt pocket. There was a kind of carved-wood quietude about him, common to those who have been a long time without sex, out of the traffic of the world.

"This here's Kaylee Felts and Shorty, stopped by to say howdy. Shorty's into rodeo. Guess you know something about rodeo, don't you, Hondo?" He spoke loudly, as though the man were deaf.

The bronc rider said nothing, his blue, sweet gaze returning to the saddle, the right hand holding a piece of lamb's wool, beginning again to move back and forth over the leather.

"He don't say much," said Moore. "He has a lot of difficulty but he keeps tryin. He's got plenty of try, haven't you, Hondo?"

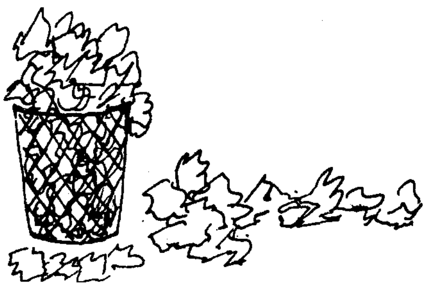
The man was silent, working the leather. How many years since he had spurred a horse's shoulders, toes pointed east and west?

"Hondo, looks like you ought to change them sorry old floppy stirrup leathers one day," said Moore in a commanding tone. The bronc rider gave no sign he had heard.

"Well," said Diamond's mother after a long minute of watching the sinewy hands, "it was wonderful to meet you, Hondo. Good luck." She glanced at Moore, and Diamond could see a message fly but didn't know their language.

They walked outside, the man and woman together, Diamond following, so deeply angered he staggered.

"Yeah. He's kind a deaf, old Hondo. He was a hot saddle-bronc rider on his way to the top. Took the money two years runnin at Cheyenne. Then some dinky little rodeo up around Meeteetse, his horse threw a fit in the chute, went over backwards, Hondo went down, got his head stepped on. Oh, 1961, and he been cleanin saddles for the Bar J since then. Thirty-seven years. That's a long, long time. He was twenty-six when it happened. Smart as anybody. Well, if you rodeo, you're a rooster on Tuesday, feather duster on Wednesday. But, like I say, he's still got all the try in the world. We sure think a lot a Hondo."



They stood silently watching Diamond get into the car.

"I'll call you," said the man, and she nodded.

Diamond glared out the window at the plain, the railroad tracks, the pawnshop, the Safeway, the Broken Arrow bar, Custom Cowboy, the vacuum-cleaner shop. The sun was down, and a velvety dusk coated the street, the bar neons spelling good times.

As she turned onto the river road, she said, "I would take you to see a corpse to get you out of rodeo."

"You won't take me to see anything again."

The glassy black river slowed between dim willows. She drove very slowly.

"My God," she shouted suddenly, "what you've cost me!"

"*What!* What have I cost you?" The words shot out like flame from the mouth of a fire-eater.

The low beams of cars coming toward them in the dusk lit the wet run of her tears. There was no answer until she turned into the last street, then, in a guttural, adult woman's voice, raw and deep, as he had never heard it, she said, "*Everything.*"

He was out of the car before it stopped, limping up the stairs, stuffing clothes in his duffelbag. He called a taxi to take him to the cracker-box airport, where he sat for five hours until a flight with connections to Calgary left.

CODY, WYOMING

HE bought a thirdhand truck, an old Texas hoopy, travelled alone for a few months, needing the solitary distances, blowing past mesas and red buttes piled like meat, humped and horned, and on the highway chunks of mule deer, hair the buckskin color of winter grass, flesh like rough breaks in red country, playas of dried blood.

He almost always had a girl in the motel bed with him, making up for years of nothing, a half-hour painkiller but without the rush and thrill he got from a bull ride. There was no sweet time when it was over. He wanted to get gone. The in-and-out girls wasped it around that he was quick on the trigger, an arrogant little prick.

"Hit the delete button on you, buddy," flipping the whorish blond hair.

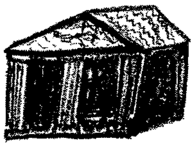
What they said didn't matter because there was an endless supply of them by now and because he knew he was getting down the page and into the fine print of this way of living. There was nobody in his life to slow him down with love. Sometimes riding the bull was the least part of it, but only the turbulent ride gave him the indescribable rush, shot him mainline with crazy-ass elation. In the arena, everything was real because none of it was real except the chance to get dead. The charged bolt came, he thought, because he wasn't dead.

One night in Cody, running out to the parking lot to beat the traffic, Pake Bitts, a big Jesus-loving steer roper, yelled out to him "You goin a Roswell?"

"Yeah." Pake Bitts was a big stout guy with white-blond hair and high color. A sticker, "Praise God," was peeling loose from his gear bag.

"Can I git a ride? My dee truck quit on me up in Livinston. Had to rent a puny car, thing couldn't hardly haul my trailer. Burned out the transmission."

"You bet. Let's go. If you're ready." They hitched up Bitts's horse trailer, left the rental car standing.



"Fog it, brother, we're short on time," said the roper, jumping in. Diamond had the wheels spattering gravel before he closed the door.

He thought it would be bad, a lot of roadside prayers and upcast eyes, but Pake Bitts was steady, watched the gas gauge, took care of business, and didn't preach.

Big and little, they went on together to Mollala, Roswell, Guthrie, Kaycee, Baker, and Bend. After a few weeks, Pake said that if Diamond wanted a permanent travelling partner he was up for it. Diamond said yeah, although he knew that only a few states still allowed steer roping and that Pake would have to cover long, empty ground, his main territory in the livestock country of Oklahoma, Wyoming, Oregon, and New Mexico. Their schedules did not fit into the same box without patient adjustment. But Pake knew a hundred dirt-road shortcuts. He steered them through scabland and slope country, in and out of the tiger shits, over the tawny plain still grooved with pilgrim wagon ruts, into early darkness and the first storm laying down black ice, ragged webs of dry rain that never hit the ground, through small-town traffic, band of horses in morning fog, two redheaded cowboys moving a house that filled the roadway, and Pake busting around and into the ditch to get past, leaving junk yards and Mexican cafés behind, turning into midnight motel entrances with "Ring Office Bell" signs or pulling off onto the black prairie for a stunned hour of sleep.

BITTS came from Rawlins, Wyoming, and always wanted to get to the next rodeo and grab at the money, was interested in no woman but his big-legged, pregnant wife, Nancy, a heavy Christian girl, studying, said Bitts, for her degree in geology. "You wont a have a good talk," he said, "have one with Nancy. Good Lord, she can tell you all about rock formations."

"How can a geologist believe that the earth was created in seven days?"

"Shoot, she's a Christian geologist. Nothin is impossible for God, and he could do it all in seven days, fossils, the whole nine. Life is full a wonders." He laid a chew of long-cut into his cheek for even he had his vices.

"How did you get into it," asked Diamond. "Grow up on a ranch?"

"Never lived on a ranch. Grew up in Huntsville, Texas. You know what's there?"

"Big prison."

"Right. Huntsville had a real good prison rodeo program for years. My dad took me. He got me started in a Little Britches program. My granddad Bitts was in Huntsville, too. Did most of his ropin there. He had a tattoo of a rope around his neck and piggin strings around his wrists. But he seen the light after a few years and took Jesus into his heart, and that passed on down to my dad and to me. And I try to live a Christian life and help others."

They drove in silence for half an hour, light overcast dulling the basin grass to the shades of dirty pennies. Then Pake started in again.

"Bringin me to somethin I wont a say to you. About your bull ridin. About rodeo? See, the bull is not supposed a be your role model, he is your opponent and you have to get the best a him, same as the steer is my opponent and I have to pump up and git everthing right to catch and thow em or I won't thow em."

"Hey, I know that." He'd known, too, that there would be a damn sermon sooner or later.

"No, you don't. Because if you did you wouldn't be playin the bull night after night. You would be a man lookin for someone to marry and raise up a family with. You'd take Jesus for a role model, not a dee ornery bull. Which you can't deny you done. You got a quit off playin the bull."

"I didn't think Jesus was a married man."

"Maybe not a married man, but he was a cowboy, the original rodeo cowboy. It says it right in the Bible. It's in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." He adopted a sanctimonious tone: "Go into the village in which, at your enterin, ye shall find a colt tied, on which yet never so man sat; loose him and bring him here. The Lord hath need a him. And they brought him to Jesus, and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus on it. Now, if that ain't a description a bareback ridin I don't know what is."

"I ride a bull, the bull's my partner, and if bulls could drive you can bet there'd be one sitting behind the wheel right now. I don't know how you figure all this stuff about me."

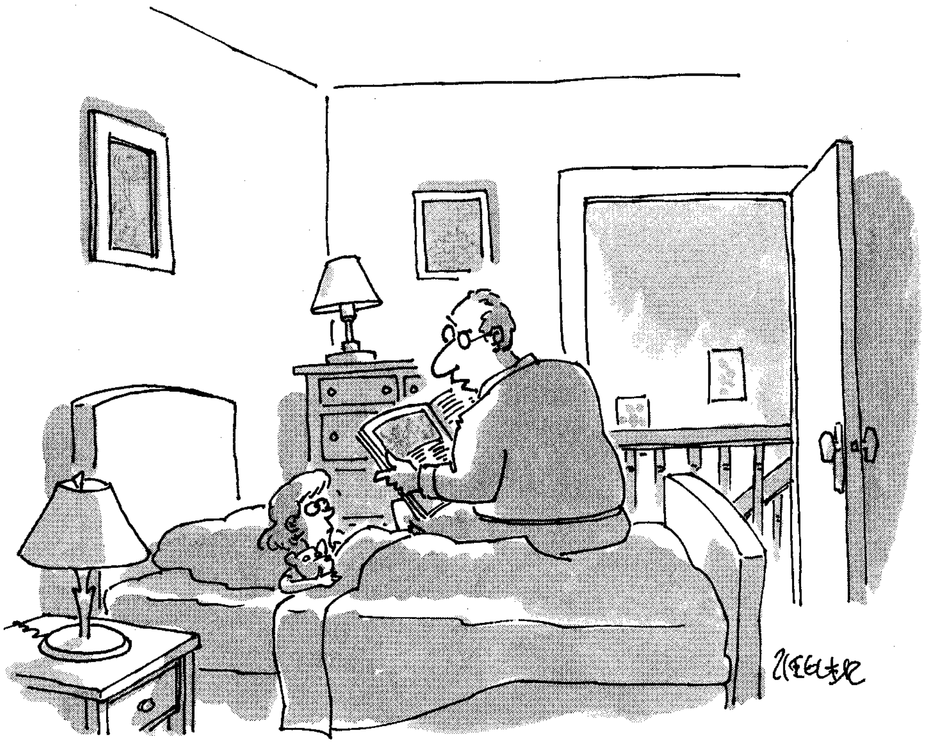
"Easy. Myron Sasser's my half brother." He rolled down the window and spit. "Dad had a little bull in him, too. But he got over it."

Pake started in again a day or two later. Diamond was sick of hearing about Jesus and family values. Pake had said, "You got a kid brother, that right? How come he ain't never at none of these rodeos lookin at his big brother? And your daddy and mama?"

"Pull over a minute."

Bitts eased the truck over on the hard prairie verge, threw it into park, misguessing that Diamond wanted to piss, got out himself, unzipping.

"Wait," said Diamond, standing where the light fell hard on him. "I want you to take a good look at me. You see me?" He turned sideways and back, faced Bitts. "That's all there is. What you see. Now do your business and let's get down the road."



"Stop asking so many questions, or it's right back to Books on Tape for you."

• •

CHEYENNE, WYOMING

HE had a wide-legged walk now as though there was swinging weight between his thighs. He dived headlong into the easy girls. He wanted the tall ones. In that bullish condition he had tangled legs with the wife of Myron Sasser, his second travelling partner. He couldn't regret it now. It had happened. He had been in Cheyenne in Myron's truck and Myron's wife was with them, sitting in the back seat of the club cab. All of them were hungry. Myron pulled into the Burger Bar. He left the truck running, the radio loud.

"How many you want, Diamond, two or three? Londa, you want onions with yours?"

They had picked her up at Myron's parents' house in Pueblo the day before. She was five-eleven, long brown curls like Buffalo Bill, had looked at Diamond and said to Myron, "You didn't say he was hardly fryin size. Hey there, Chip."

"That's me," he said, "smaller than the little end of nothing whittled to a point," smiled through murder.

She showed them a heart-shaped waffle iron she had bought at a yard sale. It was not electric; it was a gadget from the days of the wood-burning range. The handles were of twisted wire. She promised Myron a Valentine breakfast.

"I'll get this," said Myron and went into the Burger Bar.

Diamond waited with her in the truck, aroused by her orchidaceous female smell. Through the glass window they could see Myron standing near the end of a long line. He thought of what she'd said, moved out of the front seat and into the back with her and pinned her, wrestled her 36-inseam jeans down to her ankles and got it in, like fucking sandpaper, and his stomach growling with hunger the whole time. She was not willing. She bucked and shoved and struggled and cursed him, she was dry, but he wasn't going to stop then. Something fell off the seat with a hard sound.

"My waffle iron," she said and nearly derailed him. He finished in five or six crashing strokes and it was done. He was back in the front seat before Myron reached the head of the line.

"I heard it called a lot of things," he said, "but never a waffle iron," and laughed until he choked. He felt fine.

She cried angrily in the seat behind him, pulling at her clothes.

"Hey," he said. "Hush up. It didn't hurt you. I'm too damn small to hurt a big girl like you, right? I'm the one should be crying—could have burred it off." He couldn't believe it when she opened the door and jumped down, ran into the Burger Bar, threw herself at Myron. He saw Myron putting his head over to listen to her, glancing out at the parking lot where he could see nothing, wiping the tears from her face with a paper napkin he took from the counter, and then charging toward the door with squared, snarling mouth. Diamond got out of the truck. Might as well meet it head on.

"What a you done to Londa?"

"Same thing you did to that wormy Texas buckle bunny the other night." He didn't have anything against Myron Sasser except that he was a humorless fascist who picked his nose and left pliant knobs of snot on the steering wheel, but he wanted the big girl to get it clear and loud.

"You little pissant shit," said Myron and came windmilling at him. Diamond had him flat on the macadam, face in a spilled milkshake, but in seconds more lay beside him knocked colder than a wedge by the waffle iron.

OKLAHOMA

LITTLE KISSES, Bull 82N, let the hammer down. In the sixth second, the bull stopped dead, then shifted one way and immediately back again, and Diamond was lost, flying to the left and over the animal's shoulder, his eye catching the bull's wet glare, but his hand had turned upside down and was jammed. He was hung up and good.

"Stay on your feet," he said aloud, "jump, amen."

The bull was crazy to get rid of him and the clanging bell. Diamond was jerked off the ground with every lunge, snapped like a towel. The rope was in a half-twist, binding his folded fingers against the bull's back, and he could not turn his hand over and open the fingers. Everything in him strained to touch the ground with his feet, but the bull was too big and he was too small. The bullfighters darted like terriers. The animal whipped him from the Arctic Circle to the Mexico border with every plunge. There was bull hair in his mouth. His arm was being pulled from its socket. It went on and on. This time he was going to die in front of shouting strangers. The bull's drop lifted him high, and the bullfighter, waiting for the chance, thrust his hand up under Diamond's arm, rammed the tail of the rope through, and jerked. The fingers of his glove opened and he fell cartwheeling away from hooves. Then the bull was on him, hooking. He curled, got his good arm over his head.

"Oh man, get up, this's a mean one," someone far away called and he was running on all fours, rump in the air, to the metal rails, a clown there, the bull already gone. The audience suddenly laughed and out of the corner of his eye he saw the other clown mocking his stagger. He pressed against the rails, back to the audience, dazed, unable to move. They were waiting for him to get out of the arena. Beyond the beating rain a siren sounded faint and sad.

A hand patted him twice on the right shoulder, someone said, "Can you walk?" Trembling, he tried to nod his head and could not. His left arm hung limp. He profoundly believed that death had marked him out, then had ridden him almost to the buzzer, but had somehow wrecked. The man got in under his right arm, someone else grasped him around the waist, half carried him to a room where a local sawbones sat swinging one foot and smoking a cigarette. No sports-medicine team here. He thought dully that he did not want to be looked at by a doctor who smoked.

From the arena, the announcer's voice echoed as though in a culvert, "What a ride folks, far as it went, but all for nothin, a zero for Diamond Felts, but you got a be proud a what this young man stands for, don't let him go away without a big hand, he's goin a be all right, and now here's Dunny Scotus from Whipup, Texas—"

He could smell the doctor's clouded breath, his own rank stench. He was slippery with sweat and the roaring pain.

"Can you move your arm? Are your fingers numb? Can you feel this? O.K., let's get this shirt off." He set the jaws of his scissors at the cuff and began to cut up the sleeve.

"That's a fifty-dollar shirt," whispered Diamond. It was a new one, with a design of red feathers and black arrows across the sleeves and breast.

"Believe me, you wouldn't appreciate it if I tried to pull your arm out of the sleeve." The scissors worked across the front yoke and the ruined shirt fell away. The air felt cold on his wet skin. He shook and shook. It was a bad-luck shirt now anyway.

"There you go," said the doctor. "Dislocated shoulder. Humerus displaced forward from the shoulder socket. I want an X-ray first."

"Can't you—"

"X-ray."

In the mobile X-ray unit a fattish woman red-peppered with freckles guided him into position as though he held a vial of nitroglycerine, then led him back to the doctor.

"All right, I'm going to try to reposition the humerus." The doctor's chin was against the back of his shoulder, his hands taking the useless arm, powerful smell of tobacco. "This will hurt for a minute. I'm going to manipulate this—"

"Jesus *CHRIST!*" The pain was excruciating and violent. The tears rolled down his hot face and he couldn't help it.

"Cowboy up," said the doctor sardonically.

Pake Bitts walked in, looked at him with interest.

"Got hung up, hah? I didn't see it but they said you got hung up pretty good. Twenty-eight seconds. They'll put you on the videos. Thunderstorm out there." He was damp from the shower. He spoke to the doctor. "Throw his shoulder out? Can he drive? It's his turn a drive. We gotta be in south Texas two o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

The doctor finished wrapping the cast, lit another cigarette. "I wouldn't want to do it—right hand's all he's got. Dislocated shoulder, it's not just a question of pop it back in and away you go. He could need surgery. There's injured ligaments, internal bleeding, swelling, pain, could be some nerve damage. He's hurting. He's going to be in the cast for a month. If he's go-

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LASZLO

There were roses, first,
In my little fog box
Where the nurse floated
With her one carnation.

His face followed, led
By a nose worth having a face for,
And his lips kissed.
The pethidine dripping into my tube

Almost took him from me. Baglike, my belly
Gaped up at him with its stitched mouth,
Struck dumb from crotch to navel, my two halves
Trying to escape each other.

Intent, he listened to my breathing.
Then, light as dust, his hand
Rested on the row of bloody sutures
As if to make me whole.

—Frieda Hughes

ing to drive, one-handed or with his teeth, I can't give him codeine and you'd better not let him take any, either. You may want to call your insurance company."

"What insurance?" said Pake. Then, "You ought a quit off smokin." And to Diamond, "Well, the good Lord spared you. When can we get out a here? Hey, you see how they spelled my name? Good Lord." He yawned hugely, had driven all the last night coming down from Idaho.

"Give me ten. Let me get in the shower, steady up. You get my rope and war bag. I'll be O.K. to drive. I just need ten."

The doctor said, "On your way, pal."

Someone else was coming in, a deep cut over his left eyebrow, finger pressed below the cut to keep the blood out of his rapidly swelling eyes, and he was saying, "Just tape it up, tape the fuckin eyes open, I'm gettin on one."

He undressed one-handed in the grimy concrete shower room, having trouble with the four-buckle chaps and his boot straps. The pain came in long ocean rollers. He couldn't get on the other side of it. There was someone in one of the shower stalls, leaning his forehead against the concrete, hands flat against the wall and taking hot water on the back of his neck.

Diamond saw himself in the spotted mirror, two black eyes, bloody nostrils, his abraded right cheek, his hair dark with sweat, bull hairs stuck to his dirty, tear-streaked face, a bruise from armpit to buttocks. He was dizzy with the pain, and a huge weariness overtook him. The euphoric charge had never kicked in this time. If he were dead this might be hell—smoking doctors and rank bulls, eight hundred miles of night road ahead, hurting all the way.

The cascade of water stopped and Tee Dove came out of the shower, hair plastered flat. He was ancient, Diamond knew, thirty-six, an old man for bull riding but still doing it. His sallow-cheeked face was a map of surgical repair, and he carried enough body scars to open a store. A few months earlier Diamond had seen him, broken nose draining dark blood, take two yellow pencils and push one into each nostril, maneuvering them until the smashed cartilage and nasal bones were forced back into position.

Dove rubbed his scarred torso with his ragged but lucky towel, showed his fox teeth to Diamond, said, "Ain't it a bone game, bro."

OUTSIDE the rain had stopped, the truck gleamed wet, gutters flooded with runoff. Pake Bitts was in the passenger seat, already asleep. He woke when Diamond, bare-chested, barefooted, pulled the seat forward, threw in the cut shirt, fumbled one-handed in his duffelbag for an oversized sweatshirt he could get over the cast, jammed into his old athletic shoes, got in, and started the engine.

"You O.K. to drive? You hold out two, three hours while I get some sleep. I'll take it the rest a the way. You drive the whole road is not a necessity by no means."

"It's O.K. How did they spell your name?"

"C-a-k-e. Cake Bitts. Nance'll laugh her head off over that one. Burn a rag, brother, we're runnin' late."

And he was asleep again, calloused hand resting on his thigh palm up and a little open as though to receive something.

Just over the Texas border, he pulled into an all-night truck stop and filled the tank, bought two high-caffeine colas and drank them, washing down his keep-awakes and pain-stoppers. He walked past the cash registers and aisles of junk food to the telephones, fumbled the phone card from his wallet and dialled. It would be two-thirty in Redsled.

She answered on the first ring. Her voice was clear. She was awake.

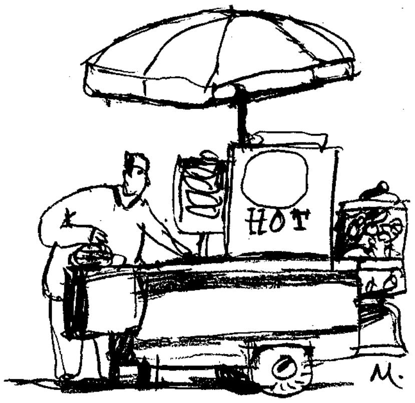
"It's me," he said. "Diamond."

"Shorty?" she said. "What?"

"Listen, there's no way I can put this that's gentle or polite. Who was my father?"

"What do you mean? Shirley Custer Felts. You know that."

"No," he said. "I don't know that."



Shirley Custer Felts had walked out ten years before. "Get the fuck out of the way were his last words to me. Get the fuck out of the way, you little bastard. You ain't no kid of mine."

"That dirty man," she said. "He set you up like a time bomb."

"I'm no time bomb. I'm just asking you, who was he?"

"I told you." As she spoke, he heard a deep smothered cough over the wire.

"I don't believe you. Third time, who was my father?"

He waited.

"Who you got there, Mama? The big slob with the black hat?"

"Nobody," she said and hung up. He didn't know which question she'd answered.

He was still standing there when Pake Bitts came in, shuffling and yawning.

"You wont me a drive now?" He pounded the heel of his hand on his forehead.

"No, get you some sleep."

"Aw, yeah. Piss on the fire, boy, and let's go."

He was O.K. to drive. He would drive all the way. He could do it now, this time, many more times to come. Yet it was as though some bearing had seized up inside him and burned out. It had been not the phone call but the flat minute pressed against the rail, when he could not walk out of the arena.

He pulled back onto the empty road. There were a few ranch lights miles away, the black sky against the black terrain drawing them into the hem of the starry curtain. As he drove toward the clangor and flash of the noon arena, he considered the old saddle-bronco rider rubbing leather for thirty-seven years, Leecil riding off into the mosquito-clouded sunset, the ranch hand bent over a calf, slitting the scrotal sac. The course of life's events seemed slower than the knife but not less thorough.

There was more to it than that, he supposed, and heard again her hoarse, charged voice saying, "*Everything.*" It was all a hard, fast ride that ended in the mud. He passed a coal train in the dark, the dense rectangles that were the cars gliding against indigo night, another, and another. Very slowly, as slowly as light comes on a clouded morning, the euphoric heat flushed through him, or maybe just the memory of it. ♦

LIFE AND LETTERS

THE CORRESPONDENT

In the last decade of her life, the author—war reporter, novelist, travel writer, and (to her enduring chagrin) Hemingway wife—became a star of literary London.

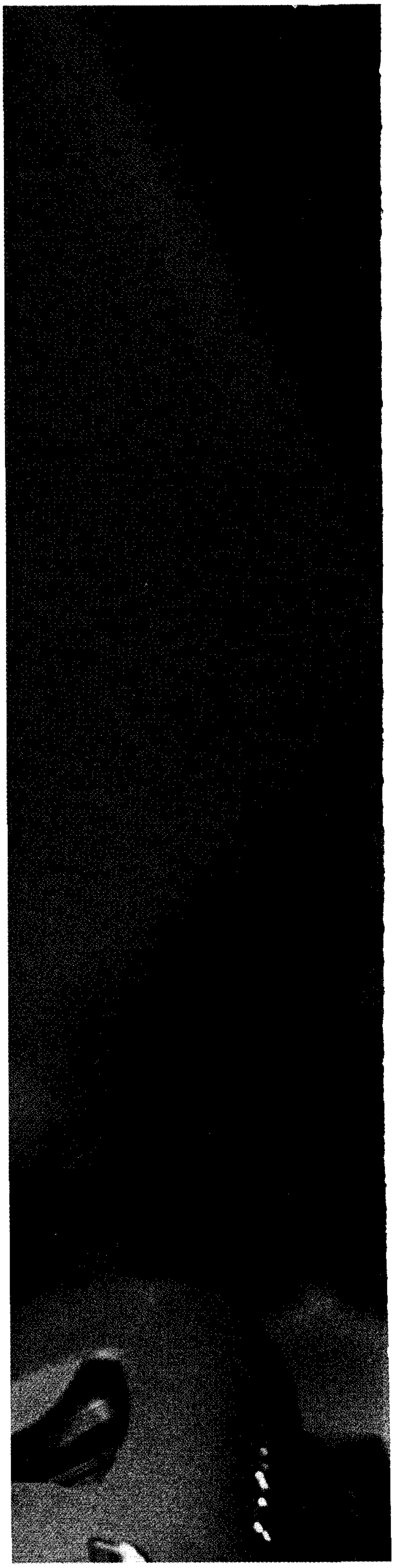
BY MARTHA GELLHORN

THERE are at least two Martha Gellhorns. The first is from the Hemingway biographies: the fiery, bossy third wife of the novelist, boozy war reporter and chain-smoking witness of the atrocities of the wars in Europe—Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Germany. This is *Marty*—blond, glamorous, straight-talking, so grand and flamboyant that she seems more like a movie star than like a writer of punchy sentences. She was a crony of Eleanor Roosevelt (and a regular guest at the White House), a passionate defender of the underprivileged, the author of several novels, and a hard-hitting journalist, with a tough, no-nonsense prose that shared (in its aversion to fanciness and unnecessary adornment) something of the pared-down style of her famous husband. By the end of the Second World War Gellhorn had given up on the famous husband—when they met in Paris, newly liberated, they were scarcely on speaking terms—and they divorced the following year: Hemingway returned to Cuba, and Marty remained in Europe and became *Martha*.

I first came across Martha in 1983, when she was seventy-five. She was living in a cottage atop a blustery, exposed hill, Catscradle, near the Welsh-English border, and also kept a flat in London, on posh Cadogan Square. A number of London journalists seem to have learned of her then as well—initially through the efforts of John Hatt, the publisher of Eland Books, a small paperback firm that reprints travel classics. In 1983, Hatt published “Travels with Myself and Another” (a reference to the famous author-husband, now unmentionable), a collection of Gellhorn’s travel writing that had appeared five years before and was out of print—a pattern that most of Gellhorn’s books seemed to follow. A year later, he published a collection of three novellas, the evocatively titled “The Weather in Africa.” (Gellhorn lived on Mt. Longonot, in Kenya, during the sixties and seventies.) Hatt was probably the only publisher who never let her down—his commitment was to keep her books in print (which he continues to do)—and he was often the first reader of her journalism. They made one journey together—to Cuba. Hatt, soon to be the travel editor of *Harpers & Queen* (Hatt’s other hat), went to write a piece; so, too, did Martha, but it was also her first visit since she had lived there with Hemingway, in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.

Martha Gellhorn was born in St. Louis in 1908 and grew up in the United States, but never returned here to live. A loner by temperament, she seems to have taken to the postwar ex-pat’s life and relished never quite belonging. But by the mid-eighties she was virtually invisible. She was no longer a figure known in the United States, and, having written little since the Vietnam War, was not much mentioned in Britain, either. To meet Martha then was a startling thing. In a letter to James Fox, she describes attending a party in Oxford in 1986, her first party in many years. (Fox, the author of “White Mischief,” the story of a murder in Kenya among the loathsome English upper class, had met Martha a couple of years before, when he was summoned by her to talk about Beryl Markham, another Kenya legend.) I was at that Oxford party. The most telling remark, whispered among astonished guests, was surprise that Martha was alive. The remark wasn’t meant to be cruel; if anything, it was a declaration of delight. Here was a woman who had lived, witnessed, written, loved so much, and who, now nearly eighty years old, was as witty, opinionated, and irreverent as ever. She was both still among us and still writing. It was a moment of great privilege. Her new friends felt that they had made a discovery.

Or, properly, a rediscovery. (Martha



“Living without underwear, the ideal sta

TOPHAM/THE IMAGE WORKS

a place where you wake to sun, I do wonder why any of us live in the world's dreariest climate. For each other of course."

herself was not all that keen to be rediscovered, a business she described as patronizing at best.) I know I felt I had rediscovered her. I was the editor of the British literary magazine *Granta* and was not content merely to publish her journalism (her account of Cuba and also pieces about Haiti and Panama): insanely, I also became both her agent (briefly) and her book publisher. Nicholas Shakespeare, then the literary editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, rediscovered her as well: he sent her to Germany to write about the neo-Nazis. Rosie Boycott, a longtime friend and, until recently, the editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, published her enthusiastically whenever she could. In fact, after that party in 1986 Martha became the central figure of something like a literary salon—her own, which met, at her instructions, in her flat on Cadogan Square whenever she made the trip to London. These trips revealed an essential contradiction: Martha was a loner who loved company. The contradiction was reconciled in her letters, the only place where she could have both solitude and intimacy. There was another Gellhorn contradiction: she loved writing, depended on it like food, and hated it. This, too, is reconciled in the letters. The edited selection that follows is, to my mind, some of her most immediate, natural writing.

Reading these letters, you need to remind yourself that the author—swimming naked at midnight, snorkelling in the Indian Ocean, chasing after Noriega in Panama—was entering her eighties, what she initially thought of as a frivolous "golden plateau." She published collections of both her "peacetime" journalism ("The View from the Ground") and two new editions of her war journalism "The Face of War" (a book she regarded as an ongoing testimony to the atrocities she had seen, and thus one that had to be regularly updated). She even contemplated writing a book about being old—she was having that much fun. She thought she had beaten the odds. —BILL BUFORD

To Victoria Glendinning

London
April 14, 1980

DEAR MRS. GLENDINNING,

I was talking to Sybille Bedford, a stupefied morning chat about chars (the lack of) when I decided to boast, saying that I had not only the most marvellous review in the N.Y. *Times* but also the only one that ever gave me real pleasure, beautifully written by someone who saw what I was writing about. "She's written a biography of Elizabeth Bowen so obviously she cares about writing," said I. Whereupon Sybille said your name and gave me your address.

I've never had cause to write and say thank you for a review. Doesn't mean I don't feel gratitude since a kind word is better than a poke in the face with a dirty stick, but I never felt *comforted*, as I did by your review [of "The Weather in Africa"]. It has been my only consolation for that book as I've got publishers, here and in the U.S., who are unable to get my books into bookstores and I think I might as well bring them out myself as samizdat; save me the nerve strain of dealing with publishers and provide the same number of readers. Writers, as you know yourself, want to be read, but I've given up hope on that.

However, *you* read my book and that has been my greatest reward.

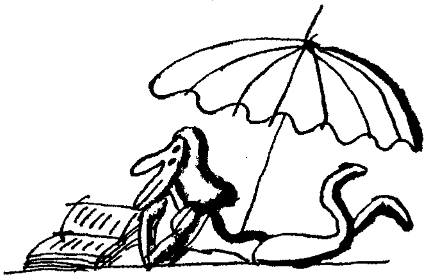
To James Fox

July 24, 1984

DEAR JAMES F.,

I could not put it down ["White Mischief"]. My plan was to nip in and out, to see how you wrote. Well, you write felicitously. I do not see how the style or tone could be bettered. But what dazzles me is your organization of the material. Bravo. It is spellbinding, despite the people involved.

With your talent, you could write biography if you wanted to. Do you care about any angle of the human condition? Are you concerned or committed, as they say in the new dead languages? Is there anything you believe for or against with passion? I am thinking about this matter of obsession, the need for, and whence obsession comes. But for a book, I feel you ought not to use that talent only on twits.



To John Hatt

May 13, 1986

DARLING JOHN,

The reason you don't hear from me is that I am teetering on the verge of madness. At least you got your Cuba piece done. I called Bill Buford and said deadline [for the Cuba article] had to be postponed indefinitely, after I'd written forty-five pages of the most cementlike dullness. I have lost it, whatever it was, which brought sentences to mind.

I have to come to London on May 29th. Might we meet and drink? Anyway I'll call you. By now you must know what's happened to *your* Cuba article which I'd love to read. Also want to hear more from you about the sexual aspects of the country, which are unknown to me but increase my feeling that it is the most non-Communist country and may be the reason for all the jollity.

Love,
MARTHA

P. S. The way to sell "The Weather in Africa" is a painting of a black man and a blonde!

Sunday

DEAR JOHN,

How, I ask myself, can I write John so that I convey profound gratitude, while also grovelling, face flat on cement. Obviously, I was having the time of my life but there is such a thing as human decency, consideration for one's fellow man, and you didn't need to be kept up until 2 A.M. on a weeknight, even if I were a combination of Sophia Loren and Jane Austen. Oh John, John, I do grovel. And what's so enraging is that I forgot my pocket alarm clock that goes off at 11 P.M. in my handbag and (if I hear it) tells me that the proper time to leave has now arrived. Anyway, when I saw the second bottle of wine I should have known that I was already so flown with same that the Cinderella hour had come. Instead I stayed and stayed and had a glorious evening and no doubt you nearly died of weariness on Friday. You were too perfect a host and rewarded by a semi-permanent guest. To think that I had the nerve to wonder at

Paul Theroux staying so long for drinks. I practically weekended with you.

"The networks are losing share and you sit there reading?"

Wales
May 18, 1986

Dearest James,

I should not have been depressed on you. It is wrong for olders to be depressed on youngers, it lowers morale, it spreads despondency and alarm. Friday was a suicide day, feeling both hideous and betrayed. Then yesterday I painted myself like *la folle de Chaillot* and dressed in dirty clothes, the only kind I have here, and set out for Oxford.

The party [at the house of the poet James Fenton] was glorious. I think it may be the second I've been to in five years, and I had little hope. Instead everyone got slowly and gently drunk on red wine, and I had those frustratingly too short moments with a few people and a bit too long with others and basked in a bubble bath of flattery to which I am not accustomed—flattery due to drunkenness and my rarity value; it would not happen if I were always on hand.

I realized how drunk I was when this A.M. I saw how I had parked my car here.

It was still raining as I was coming back last evening and I began to think of Spain. Why not live there—four best months in London, the rest of the time somewhere inland between Málaga and Almería? I might have a swimming pool, my one idea of luxe. Would the cats adjust? I like Spaniards and the language and, now they have a government that's O.K., it's possible to live there. I think I'll go over sometime, maybe September, and look around.

To Bill Buford

Lanjarón, Spain
July 1, 1986

Dearest William,

Due to what I think we may as well call genius, I found the perfect place the first day. It is a small Spanish spa, scantly frequented by elderly Spaniards, very non-jet set. The little town is ravishing. Apart from breakfast I have not yet found good food but that is because, instead of exploring and rejoicing, I have been stuck on a back-breaking chair, at a miserable table, for six days, ten hours a day, re-working my Cuban piece. And here it is. I think it is good, actually very good, and not like anything else about Cuba. Of course I may be crazy.

July 3, 1986

Dearest James,

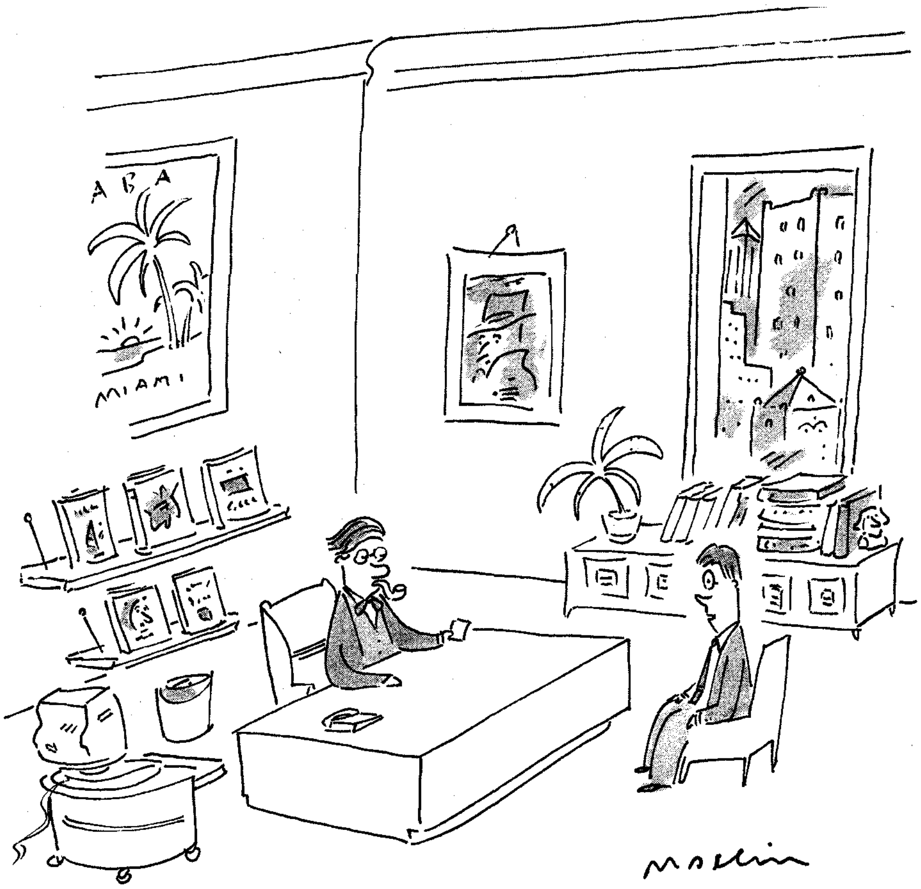
I am drunk on two beers with dinner. Can you beat it? You are much on my mind. I fear I squashed you when I should have given you encouragement and praise which we all need. I was so busy with the mechanics of your piece that I forgot to tell you how strange and interesting it was. What do I really know of you? Nothing. Yet you matter to me. I wish above all not to have depressed you for you seem to me desperately prone to depression. Yet that too may be error.

This was the year when everyone died. Diana of course, though I was glad for her. [Diana Cooper, the dowager Viscountess Norwich, a legendary aristocratic beauty, died at the age of ninety-three.] For me, a hole in my life. My chosen and protected status is an outsider. I have never seen any place or group I wanted to join. Whereas Diana needed to be snuggled in a mass of people who spoke the same jargon. Our relation was odd but lasting. She kept saying, these last awful years in bed, "You are the only person I like to see." I reminded her of a long past, I made her laugh. She is, all but one, the end of my old Brit world where I flitted in and out, accepted as an outsider.

And a pen pal for forty years died the next day in California. And a few months before a woman, ten years younger than I, died of cancer in Washington; a widow for nearly fifty years. By mail and in company, we reduced each other to helpless giggles; nobody was more whipped-cream fun to be with.

Now I am alive again. Ponce de León was a nut case: the fountain of youth is not a little spurt of water but travel. I forget everything I know; otherwise I would have left much sooner, before I became suicidal. I have only to go to a different country, sky, language, scenery, to feel it is worth living.

I never heard of anyone ever going to Motril, a town on the coast east of Málaga. The map showed a place named Lanjarón, green for altitude, on the winding mountain road to Granada behind Motril. The green *Michelin*, which John Hatt advised me to buy (I would not have thought of it), said Lanjarón (pop.: nothing much) was a spa in a beautiful setting. Tourists do not go to



"I don't have a title yet, or even a subject. All I have is the price: twenty-three ninety-five in hardcover."

• •

spas. It is heaven. For six days I did not leave this room except to buy and eat fruit. In my whole life I have never had enough cherries: 50 p. for a kilo. I reworked my Cuba piece, which is now a year late. Very hard work. Instead of denigrating my work, as I have always done, I tried a new tactic, which was to tell Bill Buford the piece was good; I hope he agrees.

Now I am free and simply rejoicing. I have a room that is aesthetically pleasing (unheard of), two huge windows and balconies and bath for £5.80 a day. The view is dazzling; counterpoint of mountains blue in the heat haze, with a ruined brown Arab castle on a peak in the foreground. A giant swimming pool in the hotel garden. The garden is neglected with waterfalls of geraniums and trees taller than the five-story hotel. I recognize only palms and Mediterranean pines.

Off the main street little alleys, hardly wide enough for a car, cobbled. The houses are white and adobe, I'd think, somehow rounded, no hard edges, and spill flowers and suddenly have grape arbors over spare space on second floors. Of course I at once want to live here but have the sense to see it is a no-no; would be icy in winter in these mountains and is really too far from anywhere.

Right now the thought of either Wales or London makes me feel sick. The difference is waking each day to sun. The soft warm nights. Few clothes. What on earth am I doing in Britain? But on the other hand, what exactly am I doing anywhere? Travelling is the best answer. *Voyageur sur la terre.* No answers needed.

Geneva, Switzerland
September 3, 1986

DARLING WILLIAM,

You have twice seen me in a state of nervous disintegration, and you will never be exposed to such awfulness again. If I cannot write competently, on time, without going crazy, I will not write. Easy. This whole Cuban mess is my fault and I despise myself for it. And I hope the bloody article is worth the trouble it has caused you.

Meanwhile I am haunted by words, sloppy use of. I go over everything I write (except this) so often and carefully that I can recite the damn things by heart.

I have done a huge amount of sleeping. The sky is blue, the mountains are lovely as always, and from this high apartment I can see the fountain in the lake and Mont Blanc. I think I am getting tired of the gray weather of the British Isles and London doesn't amuse me anymore.

Wales
September 28, 1986

JAMES HONEY,

Have you finished and turned in your Kray piece? Have you written your piece about the blood-loving vets, yearning for a class reunion of gook-killing? I earnestly hope so. I am so afraid you will dither away your time and lose your place in the queue. Do not think it is easy to nudge back in because it is not. I wasted nine invaluable years on a stupid marriage [to Thomas Matthews, an editor of *Time,* whom Gellhorn married in 1954] and lost my place forever. And I cannot bear your being despondent. Despondency can become a fixed habit, another killer. You really have no right to despond, if you think clearly. You are young, healthy, beautiful, and talented; what, I ask myself, more do you want? Perfect happiness? Oh come on; who has it. . . . This extremely bossy tone, which is one of the perks and unattractivenesses of age, is due to being devoted to you; and due also to my usual impression that there is no one else in the world besides myself always willing to tromp in heavily where any sane angel would not dare to put a foot.

New York
November 27, 1986

DEAR VICTORIA (You'll have to forgive this instant first-name use),

That was the very most glorious dinner party in living memory. I loved every minute of it, including 120 minutes at the end when (indecently) I overstayed all time limits because I had no idea that time had passed. What *did* we all talk about until the unheard-of 2:17 A.M.?

New York, for the first time in God knows how long, has been a treat from start to finish. I was very spooked about coming and dreaded a family Thanksgiving party; and it was perfectly wonderful, to my amazed delight. And also, after my having been convinced by my charming (really charming) agent for ten years that I was unsalable and unwanted, Bill Buford made one telephone call, and laid on one meeting, and I have a classy enthusiastic publisher at long last [Gary Fisketjon, then the editorial director of Atlantic Monthly Press]. I really think I came here in such good heart from your party that all went swimmingly thereafter. Thank you for it.

Wales
September 22, 1987

Dear Victoria,

I read your "Rebecca West" in three goes in three days, and it is brilliant.

What an awful story it is, too. I asked Rebecca why she had Anthony [her son, by H. G. Wells]—the obvious thing being to have Wells pay for a Swiss abortion. She said she was young and healthy and it seemed the right thing. It was, of course, not. It seems to me that she had an instinct towards self-destruction. Neurotic is almost too mild a word. Nearly mad, it seems to me. Does one inherit these things?

The passion for order: I've always been exceedingly tidy and I know why. The disorder in my mind is such that if there is also physical disorder around me, I go off my nut. Considering the amount of time I've spent at wars, which are very disorderly, this is also weird.

I knew so many of the people you write about and sometime I must tell you about me and Wells. The old fool asked me to marry him in 1935 when he was older than God and I was just twenty-seven. I've never told anyone; it seemed so ludicrous. I thought he was a bore, too.

Doing arithmetic, I see that Rebecca had no sex life from the age of forty-three, apart from two walkouts. Did Henry [Andrews, her husband] lose interest because he had already started screwing around and the double job bothered him? You use the word "philandering." For Rebecca it must have been deeply unnerving to be unwanted since she cared so much about being attractive to men. And you know, the clothes mania is always a sign of someone insecure and usually (in an intelligent woman) someone who doesn't know about clothes. Like Freya Stark and hats. Perhaps the sexual unuse gave her the fierce driving energy to use for her mind.

I love the way she wrote but I see her making that usual tedious trajectory from left to right, that I find so disappointing. (Sybille Bedford has done it.) And a passion for order, if that's what made Rebecca move rightwards, is a dangerous thing because the order of one's day is always suspect. I'm glad that she saw that the New Deal in the U.S. was extraordinary: the only good period there in my lifetime.

September 23, 1987

Dear William,

The best wisdom I can give you, from my great age and experience, is: be damned careful who you marry. Here I am, persecuted by idiocy all my life, due to a single mistake [clipping enclosed of a piece about Gellhorn as the wife of Hemingway]. This same genius writer is the one who has made the forthcoming TV series called "Hem," which opens with a train arriving at Key West where no train ever arrived and shows an actress who is both plain and cross-eyed, and is named M.G. for the film, casually jumping out of bed naked in a roomful of chaps getting ready to go to the front.

September 23, 1987

Dearest James,

I've raised my head, which is both bowed and broken, from the machine at last. Forced labor and finished. Apart from odds and ends of checking which I daresay will end as the books go to press. In my darkest hours, I thought of you filling my washing machine for me and tears of tenderness and gratitude flooded my eyes; before I set on to my cement sentences again.

I plan to come to London on October 1st, if I can galvanize myself, and off to Spain on Oct. 8th for 2 weeks on one of those airlines which have planes made of Kleenex.

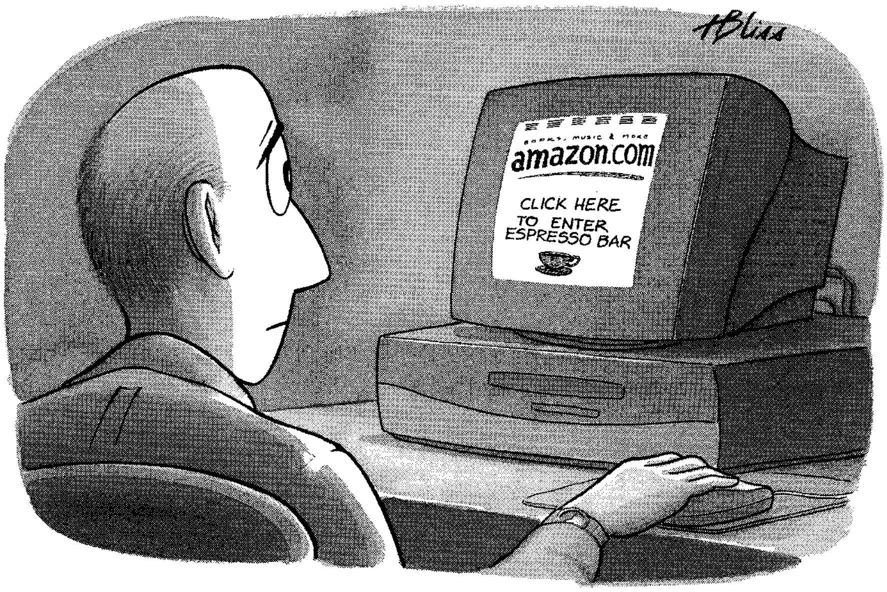
September 30, 1987

Dear Victoria,

It is 8:10 P.M. Time to chat. The best reason for letters; how I hate the telephone. And I've barely written a letter since January so now writing a letter is too lovely, like a Mars bar.

Further thoughts: *flâner* is the best French verb. It is a needed occupation. I used to worry desperately about wasting time because I saw myself as basically lazy (which I am) and also saw my time wasting as proof of a second-rate brain (which I also have). Perhaps I also felt it was sinful because such a pleasure. I now think it is as necessary as solitude; that's how the compost heap grows in the mind. Anyway I intend to spend the rest of my life wasting time.

You astound me: your never having been alone. But of course the writing hours are alone, maybe that was enough. My mama remarked in passing, when I was about forty, that people should be careful of what they are when young because they become only more so when old. I said bitterly that she might have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told me before, but I know she's right. From a non-gregarious child into a woman who has to be alone most of the time. My problem always used to be that I heard everything people said and most of it drove me up the wall.

Now, that Gip Wells [George Philip, H. G. Wells's son by his second wife, Catherine]. He showed me what Wells had written and it seems that Wells had saved my letters. I said to Gip, read them and if you think those are love letters then you never had any or wrote any. I know my love letters all right. I also told Gip that his papa now had destroyed himself in my memory by claiming me as a love affair. Why the hell would I sleep with a little old man when I could have any number of tall beautiful young men? My letters, sent to me by Gip, are good, amusing—I wrote letters instead of seeing people, like now; and especially when I was married because I was loneliest then. Gip had to admit that they were not love letters. I found it disgusting that Wells needed to add my scalp, and refused to play. Before I thought he was mostly a bore, but a serious man; and I could write to him about my endless preoccupations with the history of our time. Now I find that, since almost everyone is dead, I am hard up for anyone to whom to write when the news suffocates me with anger or grief or both.

Time for the 9 P.M. news. Don't worry, you're not going to be inundated with letters. It's just that everything is so tidy and done that I have the luxury of time, talking time. I am already homesick for my cats.

I'll be in London from Oct. 21st to Nov. 19th; this is my period for rejoining the human race. You make a call, I'm in the directory, and come and smoke and drink any time.

To Nicholas Shakespeare

London
November 17, 1987

SWEET SHAKESPEARE,

I am deeply impressed by the way you whipped up and served a delicious and abundant meal. It would have taken me a week to organize, and a nervous breakdown as well. I think men are improving enormously and am cross that I got the incompetent male-chauvinist-pig generation (not that we or they knew their name). Young females nowadays cannot compare and thus do not realize that they never had it so good.

Now I know why Vargas Llosa was not what I expected, took me all night to figure it out. I expected someone violent; signs of violence. That comes from his book ["The War of the End of the World"], which is as vast and fierce and moving and good as Dostoyevsky. I bet when you met Dostoyevsky, you started running for the door; he must have given off a strong odor of madness if he wasn't cadging money. But V.L. is/seems a perfectly controlled, well-mannered, civilized man and could easily be mistaken for almost anything except a writer.

Come and have a booze-up and a fried egg when I get back from the snowbound U.S.

Wales
December 14, 1987

DEAREST TYCOON,

This is a business letter. Dictated at that. I got a wonderful letter from a man called Miller whose wife had interviewed you and to whom you apparently said that you were publishing my new peacetime book. *Granta* is not publishing it. Absolutely not. It would give me a nervous breakdown. Nerve-racking enough to deal with you as my darling agent.

Your letter, which you announced to me by telephone, has never arrived, did you actually write it?

December 14, 1987

DEAREST WILLIAM,

So funny, you and the young lady at the *Village Voice*, and the general tone is: the kids have discovered me, while previously I languished unknown in the literary shadows. But after all my books have always been reviewed and the size of reviews changed only as the size of all reviews changed—I doubt if I will have a larger public now than the one I've always had. I took myself out in hopelessness during nine years of the Vietnam War, but there've been two books since and the good mags in the U.S. seem few and far between. I'm beginning to feel condescended to by this why-hasn't-anyone-noticed-her-before stuff.

It's cold enough here to freeze your balls off (female equivalent tits, do you think?). I feel like a tired old fart, which I believe is a bisexual term.

January 20, 1988

DEAREST JAMES,

I think of you with tenderness and concern and also fascination, comparing us, born a week and almost forty years apart. I find one similarity—the habit of self-destruction in male-female relationships. All my life I was chosen (pounced on, with claws & bared fangs) by killer men and always gave in, until I had the sense to flee. I see that I never chose a man myself—idiotic, like an Arab or Oriental woman—but never learned to recognize killers.

I've also been thinking what I was doing at your age, forty-three, and see that I was just as (though differently) in a muddle: only work—an absolute financial necessity (a three-year-old son to support plus myself), and an emotional/mental necessity—kept me operational through a life that now looks to me unbelievably like playing chicken with oneself, as if to see how much you could take and survive.

I do not think either of us is an idiot. But I do not understand why I (thank God no longer) and you (still) had to be so blindly wrong in male-female biz, which is a basic.

If I had a typewriter, I'd write you a book.

Mombasa, Kenya
February 26, 1988

DARLING WILLIAM,

All right, I don't want to break your heart and I think you need me and I would rather deal with you [as my publisher], despite your inability to recognize the limit of twenty-four hours in the day, than deal with a literary lady. Maybe I prefer dealing with gentlemen anyway; certainly Virago has put me off women publishers in a big way.

Oh yes, brief business; I think I was so offhand with Rowohlt's lady editor that that deal has collapsed. You know what, I don't really give a fart if I'm not translated into German.

Today, in a trance of concentration, I worked from 10 A.M. until 4 P.M., when I suddenly remembered I had a haircut appointment at the local grand hotel (which cost more than London). Fifteen minutes off at 2 P.M. to knock back sandwich and iced tea. I was going over the three and a half finished chapters of my

ROBERT CAPA/MAGNUM

"Men wanted me and became furious when they found out that I was separate from them, with my own ideas, needs, plans, actions."

novel, "Meaningless Question," which I've written with such scary meandering ease. It may be totally worthless but (I may also be losing my marbles) it seems to me to read as smooth as syrup. And it's a funny idea, too; I mean funny peculiar.

For a couple of nights I was swimming naked at midnight and thus located the Southern Cross, which gave me a deep thrill as if I'd suddenly become an astronomer. The main trouble with me is I cannot learn things, factual things; I tried in vain one year to get the heavens straight but never succeeded so now, if I find anything, I am overcome with pride.

To Gary Fisketjon

Wales
June 13, 1988

DEAR GARY,

We have both learned, the hardest way, that the taboo is absolute: reviewers take note of hardbacks only. ["The Face of War" and "The View from the Ground" had just been published in paperback.] This thundering silence has broken my heart and no doubt wreaked serious damage to your budget.

I can hardly bear this, and it is a new experience. I never gave a damn, never asked any publisher about sales, never bothered with royalty statements; wrote; and that was my job and there it finished. But these [two books] were a record and I wanted that to be read; and, for the first time, more than my own effort mattered; and for the first time, not even my effort has been noticed. I am terribly sad for the material loss to Atlantic Monthly Press, as you must know. Not, naturally, as sad as I am about the uselessness of my work.

There will be a hardback of "The View from the Ground" in Britain, as well as the paperback. But to be a totem in Britain, as I am becoming, means nothing much; I wanted to be read in the U.S., where I hoped my anger would feed other angers.

October 27, 1989

DEAREST OF ALL JAMES'S,

I think I told you my birthday was Nov. 7th—very interesting, that's my father's birthday; I'm the 8th. The 7th is the date of the Russian Revolution, the 11th is Armistice Day; we Scorpios belong in turbulent times. I feel like a crushed caterpillar myself, just now. Deeply glum. Why has my book ["The View from the Ground"] simply sunk beneath the waves? Why are all my books like that? What's the matter? I think I've lacked the Literary manner. Last night I listened to the Booker Six talking about their books [a television program about the authors short-listed for the Booker Prize for fiction]; I could not have done it, not for money, not for fame. Haven't the vocabulary. Does that make my books insignificant?

Did you read, or look at, my war novel that I gave you? I long for your opinion. I'd think maybe my fiction was unknown because too dark, but it isn't, not all of it. I wrote two really funny books—novels. And what about the short stories? It seems now that I'm going to be a smash hit in Germany of all places I detest. I feel lost, all the work ignored as if valueless.

"Why can't you be more like little Hester Prynne? She's getting straight A's."

For the first time this year I realize that I am very old, partly due to ill health, partly due to Jane Bown's photographs, which showed such an old woman. One does not see oneself as others (and cameras) see one. Normally I don't see myself at all. Now I see myself as all looks gone and pointless.

To Paul Theroux

London
October 30, 1989

DEAR LONG LOST PAUL,

I've been meaning to write to tell you that I *adored* your China book. Read it en route to Denmark, hugging myself to be there not China. My admiration for you is unlimited: your endurance, your knowledge, your curiosity, and your writing. You are brilliant on the maddening no-joke Chinese laugh. I noted that even you came over queer (from time to time) at the Chinese habit of hoicking and spitting out a sheep's eye. They were doing that forty-nine years ago, causing me to retch my way through the country, the involuntary quickly suppressed retch. Have you any idea why the Chinese alone do this, forever? And also did you ever see or hear a woman doing it? But you do not mention flies or bedbugs so something must have improved.

If you're here, you'll know it's getting dark at 5 P.M. My heart quails, and I start thinking of winter escapes. I'm tired of the polluted Indian Ocean and wondered about that reef you spoke of, outside Belize. Please tell me more or tell me how to find out. Is there any comfortable place to stay? Viz: reading light, screens or mosquito net, fridge, clean—near the reef? Do you have to reach the snorkelling by boat? I want to get away for January and February and thought of that, for a change. I'd be immensely grateful for gen.

Belize City, Belize
January 18, 1990

Dearest John,

You will be fascinated to know that fabled Ambergris [in Belize] is a dud. It is also an island-size clip joint; the main rippers off are foreigners, but the natives (very charming people) are learning fast. More riveting news: I've been here six days, and it has rained day and night like the monsoon, and blown a gale from the north. Natch I did not bring a sweater. I brought luggage like a curse, like a nightmare; I am trapped by my fucking luggage. But what I need—sweater, new typewriter ribbon, flashlight—I have not got.

As to the swimming, Paul Theroux is mad. You can only swim from a long pier to which you must trudge (I went in for a minute between cloudbursts). The water is shallow and filled by turtle grass, nasty in itself and sharp, with a slimy bottom. To snorkel you take a boat ($7.50 per trip) with other tourists out to the reef about a mile away. Not my idea. Re Paul Theroux, a strange man, I spoke to him. He said of your review, in his odd dead voice, "It was nice, it was really nice. Hatt must be a noble man. He rescued a friend of mine (I've forgotten the name) by bringing out his book 'Living Poor.'" Have I got that right? I however will not trust Theroux again.

I've rented a large comfortable highly tasteless and very costly service flat for a month, knowing I will be bored blind (I am) but also knowing this is the way to get writing done. I've only been settled for two days and have worked each day for four hours. I am writing too easily, too fast, so obviously it will be worthless stuff. I want to know (a) if I can still write fiction and (b) if I want to.

Got mail from Wales in six days. Amazing. No excuse for you guys not to write to me in this dismal self-imposed exile.

Please tell Nicholas that I have at last read "Utz," and I agree with him about it. It is extraordinary. Bruce Chatwin was an original and the range of knowledge is breathtaking. The writing is very beautiful, marble, carved, and perfect. But I am right about Chatwin's coldness; he does not like his people, he feels no pity, he is an entomologist studying insects, freakish insects.

January 26, 1990

My dearest James,

I'm going to Panama. Just heard that our noble asshole President is allocating 1000 million (surely a billion?) dollars to "rebuild Panama" whereas, as I remember, 300 million was allocated to rebuild Eastern Europe. James, we hold shameful passports, you and I; you don't mind and suffer as I do. I can hardly stand the idiocy and mindless cruelty done in my name as a citizen. I wish I were a Dane, Danes never have to be ashamed.

February 15, 1990

Darling Nicholas,

Don't you love me anymore? Out of sight, out of mind, is it? Though I admit that the world-shaking events do take one's attention off tiddly private matters. I spend one to two hours every evening going mad with my radio trying to find out what is happening next [in Panama]. The BBC comes over as a whisper. The worst signal of any. Mrs. T's cuts I expect. The fact is, despite Mrs. T's boasting, it's become a nuisance country while the U.S. continues to be an idiot country.

I want you to give me a letter which will not obligate anyone, you or the *Telegraph* or me, and I may not need it but better to have it. To Whom It May Concern: Martha Gellhorn is a special correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*. Any courtesies extended to her will be appreciated. I mean to go to Panama when the troops have left, if Bush keeps his word. Nobody there but the natives, like going to the Eichmann trial after the world press had departed. This is for me a duty trip, I guess: as long as I'm around I have to keep on with the record, how things really are, as near as I can find out.

Just today, I decided to chuck my novel. If it bores me, it cannot be good. I got about 12,000 words done and suddenly it stopped; that's to say, interest. It may be that the huge excitements in the outside world make a novel about unimportant people too puny to bother with.

I pine for mail.

February 22, 1990

Dearest William,

Urgent. I asked Nicholas to give me a credentials letter on the grounds that if I needed one in Panama, the *Telegraph*, famously right wing, would be just the ticket. He hasn't. I think I must have one, and even more for the trial of Noriega if it actually begins as stated. My plan now is to leave here and moon around Belize for a week; then Panama. I may find nothing worth writing about or not feel I can dig enough. But I am madly curious about both: Panama was the maddest venture yet, and the trial of Noriega, if it ever happens, is bound to be incredible.

I gather that the weather has been even more repulsive than ever before. Living without underwear, the ideal state, in a place where you wake to sun, I do wonder why any of us live in the world's dreariest climate. For each other of course.

Wales
August 26, 1990

William dear one,

Rollyson's book ["Nothing Ever Happens to the Brave—The Story of Martha Gellhorn," an unauthorized biography] is almost a paean of hate; Hemingway would have adored it. And Rollyson would never have bothered with me, except for Hemingway. It has made me sick to read it with horrid care, noting the lies, inaccuracies, etc. for future use. He has used, as narrative, a rewording of all my printed work; and he transposes my fiction directly into my life with weird effects.

January 3, 1991

Darling Victoria,

The only answer to the Yuletide season is mine—the beatific opt-out. The painlessness is incredible. I cannot even bear to do routine pre-Xmas shopping. So I ran a bit short of food, no bad thing, and made Xmas dinner of peanut-butter sandwiches. But I adore the microwave, it was invented for me. I now discover that all the simple (and quite poor relatively) folk around here have had microwaves for years. It takes the educated classes longer. The joy of this instant food and no washing up is total. Since my usual dinner hour is around midnight, if I have the energy to eat at all, it is bliss to get the whole feeding thing done in max four minutes.

Thank you for the Rebecca letter. I always secretly felt I had killed her. There was a terrible piece, an interview or some such with Anthony (who clearly inherited all Wells's shit blood), which someone sent to me. Rebecca had heard about it and wanted to see it. I said, "Why bother with such tripe," but she insisted, and I did send it and as she died not long after I was sure the shock and rage and horror of reading the vile stuff her son spewed out had done her in. What an unhappy life she had; so unjust; she deserved far better. I hope being a Dame and praised and revered as a writer made up a bit. I don't know how old she was in the last years when I knew her, but the very old, of whom I have known many, are spooky—and it spooks me as I am heading that way, because of physical disabilities. She was so nearly blind and overweight and it was hard for her to move; nothing wrong with her brain but the body was a trap. I was crazy about being old and still am; now, the wear-and-tear factor enters in and alarms me. If the Devil had shown up at my house, instead of calling on dreary Faust, and offered me a perfectly functioning body until death in exchange for my soul, I'd have said it's a deal, Bud, with joy.

Meantime I have found out how to dominate the stupefying boredom of plodding daily up and down my pool [Gellhorn had just had a pool built outside her Catscradle cottage]: an old tape recorder and classical music. Strange affair. I haven't listened to music for twenty-one years and didn't know why I simply had no desire to hear any. Then I had a revelation (this does happen even to people who avoid introspection): my mother died slowly, a few terrible last weeks, unable to speak, while gently classical music played on a super machine given to her by my second husband [Thomas Matthews] sounds from the sitting room. I told this to Lenny Bernstein and he said, "You associate music with death." No, but apparently with my mother's death. Chopin is another revelation. As late as 1950, I remember being in uncontrollable tears at a concert in Mexico City, Rubinstein playing Chopin. I was in a box with a bunch of Eyetie grandees, *en visite* there, and clearly they were embarrassed but that didn't matter to me. Chopin meant the death of the Republic of Spain, all that bravery and suffering for nothing, since we always opened the windows against the blasts and played Chopin on E's wind-up gramophone during artillery bombardments of Madrid. Not defiance, I don't think, but a reminder of loveliness in the world. Now, swimming, I can listen to Chopin again, hugely noisy at top volume in that echo-chamber glass house, with delight. I know nothing about music, but like all ignorant people I know what I like—and the liquid clarity and beauty of Chopin is my favorite.

The news from Russia is obsessively interesting and here I get no newspapers. So I roam from one news program to another one, hoping for more. I cannot feel about Yugoslavia and know this is a deadening of the mind. Clearly, as usual, there is a villain, the demagogue President of Serbia who inflamed his stupid people with an ancient idea, that they were encircled with enemies. All the horrors in the world can be traced to leaders, the visible ones, and the shadowy ones behind them: the money-and-power men who I know are there. I've decided that I hate history, all of it, past and present, for it is made by leaders who have no concern for human beings at all, ever.

Malta
September 9, 1991

JAMES,

Where are you? I miss you. Back in Cadogan Square Sept. 15-22. Leningrad was beyond all hopes, never expected such beauty and a changed people. That was Aug. 1st. I'm truly sorry that I missed Aug. 19-20 [the coup]. But at least I'm interested in Russia. Going back next summer. Snorkelling

AMERICAN SUMMER-1971

AT THE JEWISH BEACH

IN 1971, my father was a Negro statistic familiar to welfare workers all over New York: not married to my mother, he was the father of four of her six children, but he still lived at home with his own mother, in Crown Heights, far from our apartment in East New York. One Saturday afternoon, however, he decided to take my mother, my little brother, and me on a journey a long way from home—on the IND train and by bus—to the place where the Jews went swimming and sunning: Manhattan Beach. Daddy hoped that the Jews, whom he revered, would rub off on us there. He ate Jewish food—tongue and cheesecake—over on Delancey Street, in "the city," whenever he could, though not before shopping for bargains and complaining about how cheap the Jews were, but how smart they were, too—with a beach of their own. Daddy knew where the Jews bathed, because our mother worked nearby, cleaning their houses.

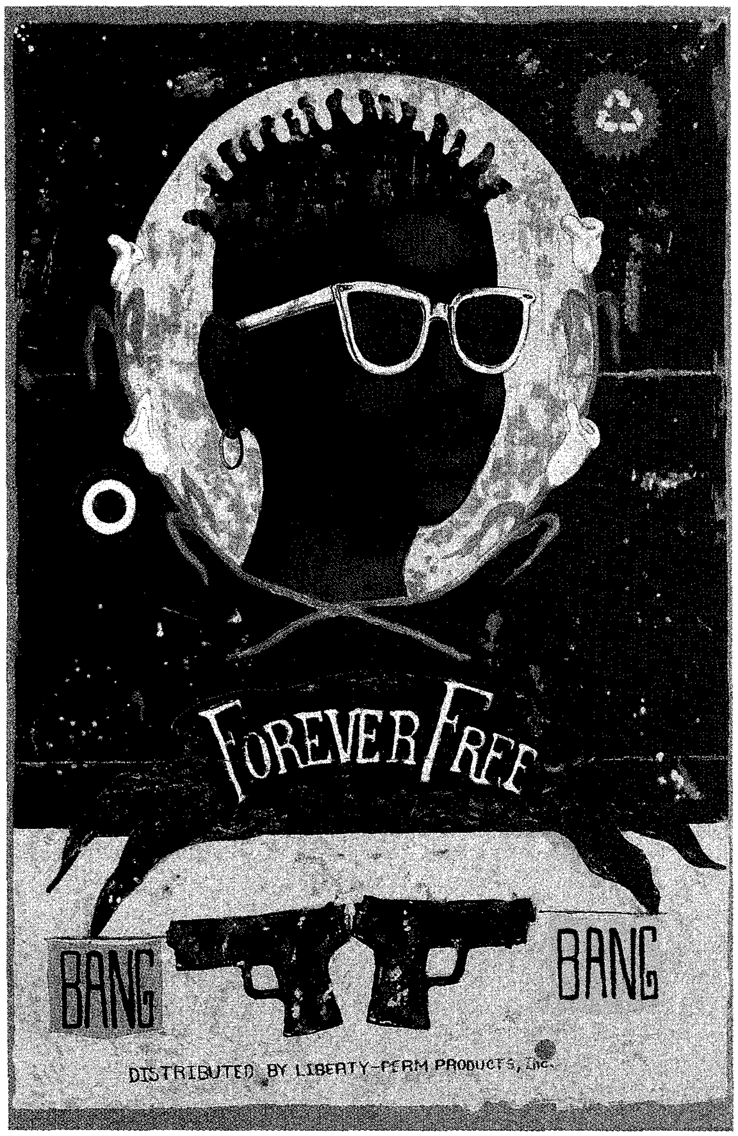
No family as dark as ours had been to Manhattan Beach before. The sand there was cleaner than we had ever seen it at the beach in Coney Island, where the colored people went. Also, it was not as crowded. The Jews never brought pans to fry chicken, or loud radios to play salsa; they read books and newspapers instead. I was curious to see whether the Jews would use their wigs and yarmulkes as swimwear. They did not, but they did put on the bridges of their large noses a white substance that we didn't need.

We sat together quietly and with great trepidation—my parents, my little brother, and I—trying not to behave "colored." Then Daddy, whose feet were reddish brown, dropped the pages of his *Racing Form* all over the sand. They blew away from us, and we felt like all the loud and disadvantaged niggers the Jews had left East New York to avoid and whose robberies they read about every Sunday in the Brooklyn pages of the *Times*.

Though some of the kids in East

MICHAEL RAY CHARLES' "[FOREVER FREE] BANG, BANG, 1995"; COURTESY TONY SHAFRAZI GALLERY

New York had skin the color of cheetahs' spots, and others were the color of coconuts, the high-contrast black-and-white photographs in the *Times* made the city's young colored underclass look plain "black," and most of the photographers seemed to view Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx as a collective dump, where dead-end kids dived into crowded pools and stoned junkies on bumpy concrete stoops plunged endlessly in and out of the depthless blue of narcotics.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I'd end up on one of those stoops, too, if I didn't get smart, like the Jews, and get out of East New York, where there was only one large, overcrowded public pool that nasty boys or girls sometimes shit in. While those boys and girls put conditioner in their damp hair and displayed their bodies to one another, I sat in my mother's house in my lace-trimmed calico shorts (unaware that such apparel was strictly for girls), reading, over and over again, Betty Smith's "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn," the story of a girl who yearned to be a writer and to write about Brooklyn in her own way.

The Jews' skin was so white that the water at their beach had to be clean, and we were afraid to swim, for fear of polluting it. But my mother and I did leave our nubby peach beach blanket for one small expedition: we went to pull mussels off the rocks—out of sight, so that no one would think we were stealing. Later that day, after Daddy had gone to his home and we had gone to ours, she put those mussels in a sauce she had made out of onions, garlic, and olive oil, and we ate the briny stew with the relish of criminals who think they have got away with something.

—HILTON ALS

here, but *où sont les soleils d'antan*? Seems it's a fine summer in London. Please make a sign.

To James Fox

Wales
December 22, 1991

DEAR ETERNAL LOVE,

My theory is that men are not interested in women, don't want to know them as people, listen to them as separate human beings. Women are afraid to talk, knowing full well the self-absorption of males and fearing to lose their attention if they dare present their own lives as separate and important. Women can be very interesting, talking to each other. They conceal or suppress this with men, because long (maybe millennial) experience has taught them that men are not concerned, don't want to know; men want to be flattered, soothed, encouraged, helped, and listened to. Not the reverse.

I like men, which is unusual; I mean like them as people. I find them touching and funny, on the whole. In my life, apart from men friends, men wanted me and became furious when they found out that I was and insisted upon being a person, separate from them, with my own ideas, needs, plans, actions. It is a great pity that the sexes cannot treat each other as equals, the same sex or no sex, when out of bed: they'd get on so much better. But at least you can make a start by trying to "fancy" a woman as herself, as well as a body. On the other hand, I doubt very much whether you'll find the ideal woman for both bed and living. I know of three couples in my entire life who managed that. And of course you must search but you might search with more enlightenment.

This is enough Wisdom from Wales for now, maybe forever.

February 2, 1992

DEAREST VICTORIA,

I've done two pieces, neither good, but very amazed I can write anything. I try to think about my "memoir" but find that almost impossible. Looking back is a misery. I don't remember what was fun and funny; I remember what I wish to forget, the wrong sad hurting things, and I'm so pleased that normally, left to myself, I have a genius faculty for forgetting, good and bad alike, sign of a mediocre mind, but makes life easier. So now what. I have, for my whole life, ten diaries, those cheap red books with a page a day, and those not filled. One page was too much trouble. But I read two from the seventies and felt suicidal. They are useless books; they don't tell me where I was or what I was doing, since I knew that; they are only feelings and the feelings are coal black. I stopped because I couldn't bear to look back there and haven't had the nerve to go on with this. I really don't know what to do. Another unknown man is apparently getting ready to do another unauthorized job and various nice but untalented American women are writing books about my work.

I have become ugly. You may be surprised that at my age this both horrifies me and startles me. My idea of the bad part of old age was just that; getting ugly. I never thought at all about the inevitable decay of the body and what that could mean, I only thought about my face. Now it's plain hideous. The left, operated eye, which is far from a miracle job, is so much smaller that I have a Picasso touch and all around my eyes is soggy and dreadful. I will have to wear dark glasses to save my own feelings. The rest isn't much cop either. I am sure that vanity (physical) never dies in either men or women; all that happens is you feel unacceptable because there is nothing left to have vanity about.

Enough. I'm too cold even to think of trying to save myself.

March 25, 1992

DEAREST VICTORIA,

I got a call from my beloved younger brother (aged seventy-eight in April) to tell me (or, rather, handing the phone to his daughter, because he couldn't talk) that his wife (aged eighty) collapsed out of the blue, taken to hospital; a malignant brain tumor. Apart from my parents', theirs is the only perfect marriage I have ever known. Lasting now more than fifty years, and undiminished—the laughter, the tenderness, the mutual admiration, the respect for each other's interests, the complete bond without any interference, the unquestioned fidelity . . . There is nothing to do for her. They are bringing her home from hospital to die, surrounded by their love; my hope is that she doesn't herself know what is happening because her pain at leaving Alfred alone would match his. Fighting off tears, one of Alfred's daughters (there are four) said, "We all expected to celebrate her 100th birthday, like her mother's."

As always, I am appalled by the cruelty of life, which leaves nobody scot free. Excepting me, the unscathed, the absurdly unscathed.

Seems the New York back specialist, whom I knew was a crook (sending bills for visits he did not make), was a lazy fool as well. Misdiagnosed my back. A collapsed (which means flattened) disk pressing on the sciatic nerve. Not curable but relievable, actually already relieved. I know how it happened, too, in 1969 or 1970, before which time I didn't know I had a back. I drove my pickup on the then terrible roads from the Indian Ocean coast to my Rift Valley residence, about thirteen hours straight, got there and found no gardener in residence, and lifted a beer crate from truck to house, all but hearing everything tear in the exact location of said disk. Intermittent back pain ever since; age increases everything as we know, increasing everything tedious about the body at least.

London
April 14, 1992

DEAREST JAMES,

Here is a love letter. I was feeling like something left over, secondhand, an object in an Oxfam shop, and you made me feel alive and hopeful. I adore your society but live in girlish terror of imposing; I was brought up in the old school where the female waits at the telephone but never herself dials a number. However, I do always notify you when I am around and I do always dote on our home cooking and conversation. When the two of you have become a couple, as I am sure you will—and a good thing for both—I shall retain my ancient privilege of seeing you both separately because couples make me nervous, as they usually make each other nervous unless lost in a vast crowd. But I wish you well and assure you that any nubile and intelligent woman would be bonkers if she did not fall into your arms.

November 9, 1992

DEAREST VICTORIA,

We have a new President, I stayed up until 5:30 A.M. to see him through. Anyway thank heaven the entire electorate is not half-witted. For me, Clinton's best qualification is that he protested the Vietnam War.

The book you chose, "The English Patient" [Glendinning chaired the panel that awarded the 1992 Booker Prize]. It is beautiful, mesmerizing writing. When I got to the end and realized he learned all that, the desert, the Italian campaign, from books, I realized that's genius, that kind of imagination, to learn and transform, make entirely your own, just from reading. The Italian campaign was my war, and I remember mines all right; it was like a land full of snakes. You'd hear them going off far behind and know some miserable peasant had blown himself up ploughing his field. The place names surprised me because I didn't know them and after Ancona, the thing is, yes, it was fought uphill, up mountains, through every walled or hilltop village and town, and mined, mined, mined. But how beautiful the book is, hypnotic. The desert part is brilliant. Do you know the desert? I saw it only once, in dawn light near Tibesti, as beyond belief beautiful. You did a fine job in selecting him.

The U. of Nebraska wishes to adopt me and why not? They are very big on Indians and Willa Cather; I could lend light relief.

To Rosie Boycott

Wales
April 27, 1994

DARLING ROSIE FIXIT,

I am ashamed to lean on you so much for aid and comfort. But about the cats' foster home: these are rich cats, they will be endowed for life, cost nobody for their food, and the caretakers will be rewarded. But my heart quails, Rosie, when I think of them alone, frightened, in a strange house. They have never met a dog. They have been my most constant companions for thirteen years and I feel about them as if I were abandoning old friends who count on me. But I cannot live here. Today was almost decent but it has been strong cold wind and rain, and my body hurts all over. Life in the country is also much more and harder work and I'm past it. There are no seasons any longer, only an ocean of paperwork. You know, it does get to the point where it seems too much trouble to be alive. If I weren't so interested in what happens in the world, though now only as a TV spectator, I'd see no point in it at all. [Gellhorn sold her Welsh cottage in 1995.]

May 5, 1994

ROSIE DARLING,

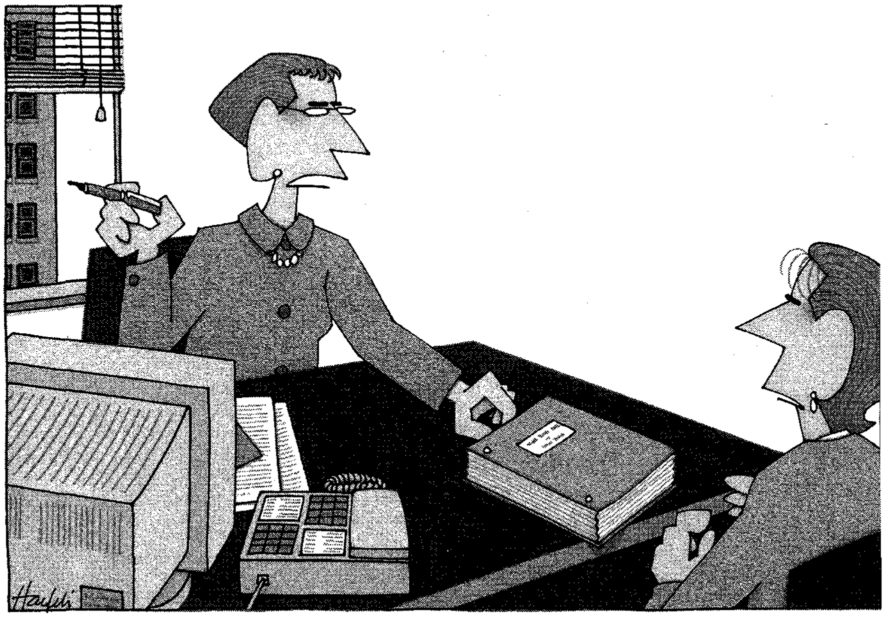
If I am around I will certainly do my best to keep you from marrying again. If you ever find yourself helplessly in love and think marriage is the answer be sure to have a year's engagement first.

London
June 8, 1996

DEAREST VICTORIA,

I have been listening to your life of E. Bowen on a tape from the Royal Blinds. It is read by a man with a torturing voice, but I am getting skillful and can now separate words from voices.

I am also listening to "Phineas Finn" and loving it. I love Trollope. I love the way he plods on with his story without fuss and you believe his people all the way. He had the real gift of storytelling so that you must go on and on, what happens next. And I'm also listening to Graham Greene's "Ways of Escape," which seems to be No. 2 of his autobiography. I do wish I had met him, he's the only one I regret. He and E.B. have in common, though Greene even more, the detailed knowledge of their own writing. Badly put. It is the carefulness about their own work which impresses me, and I wonder if not having it is a bad sign. I have been thinking of this and tracing my own unknowledge back to childhood with my brothers when the greatest sin was boasting, bragging. Telling on anyone was too inconceivable to be a sin but bragging was contemptible. The result is that I never knew what my older brother, lately dead, had done—the sheer range and importance, nationally and internationally, of his work in law—until I read about it after his death. I'll never know about Alfred's pioneer work in medicine, because I'll die first and, although not long ago the medical grandees had gathered to praise him at some sort of ceremony, I could not get from him copies of their speeches. I don't think he has them. Nobody bragged. What a pity.



"Less roman, more clef."

• •

You know I cannot see what I write so I hope this letter is understandable. The final blow. From the age of seventy to eighty, I was astonished by how delightful life had become, an unexpected golden plateau, and was all set for a spiffing old age, irresponsible and self-indulgent. But exactly four years ago that plan was forever spoiled. Most people do not live as long as I have and certainly not without any grievous health problems and no money anxiety, so I ought to count my blessings, but instead I feel trapped and limited and disgusted and only hope that travel, even limited as it is now, will not fail me, will still revive me, because it is change, because there is chance of newness.

To Gloria Emerson

November 22, 1996

DEAREST GLORIA,

My eyesight gets worse but I have somehow ground out three different pieces about Brazil, and also managed to fine tune, more or less, something I wrote in a penny notebook in 1994 when I could still see enough. It is a worrying piece since for the first time in more than half a century I actually mention the initial E. and events connected to him.

Weather vile; I mostly stay in bed listening to horrendous voices mangling audio books. I think you are heroic.

January 13, 1998

DEAR PAUL,

I am not going to write you after listening to each book [Theroux had sent cassette recordings of his recent books] but I must say that "Kowloon Tong" is a brilliant horror story. I hated Bunt and Betty so much that I wanted to kill them with my bare hands. They are extraordinary inventions and the details of their lives are perfect.

I don't understand why you wrote "My Other Life." I had heard about this book and heard that you denied being the Paul Theroux who is the central character. You have certainly made him a deeply dislikable man; I won't go so far as to say odious. The book makes writing a cheap trade for snoopers and eavesdroppers and note-takers. To me it was not an interesting book as completely self-absorbed. Was this book some peculiar form of gamesmanship? I think it a dangerous one to play with your readers.

Limbo is a new country to live in and not one I would gladly choose. At present there's no escape and one must always remember that it's worse for the men at sea.

Martha Gellhorn died on February 15th. ♦

ANNALS OF AUTHORSHIP

WHOSE MOVIE IS THIS?

How much of "Easy Rider" belongs to the novelist Terry Southern?
A countercultural morality tale.

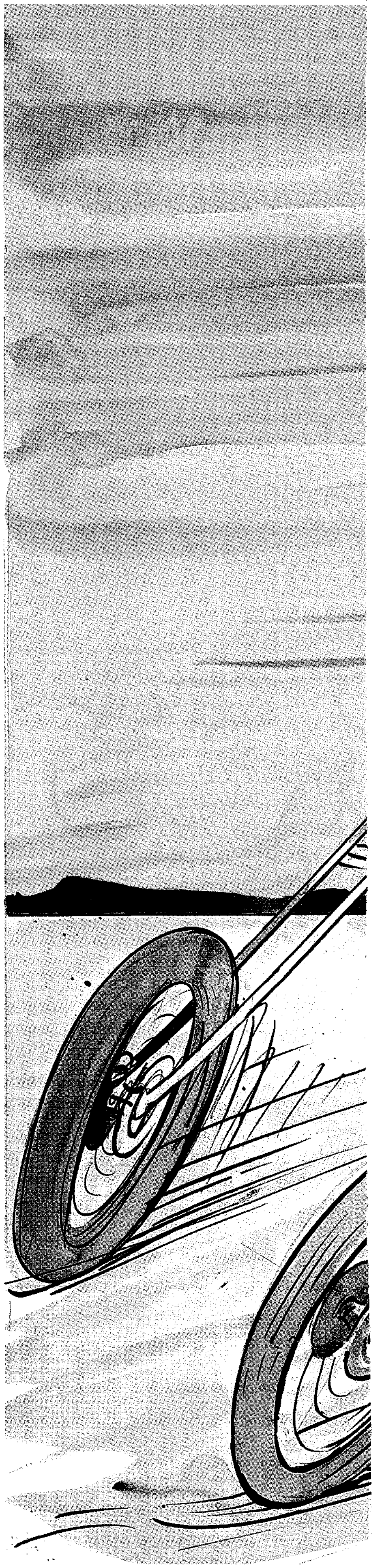
BY MARK SINGER

STEVE SCHAPIRO; OPPOSITE: GERALD SCARFE

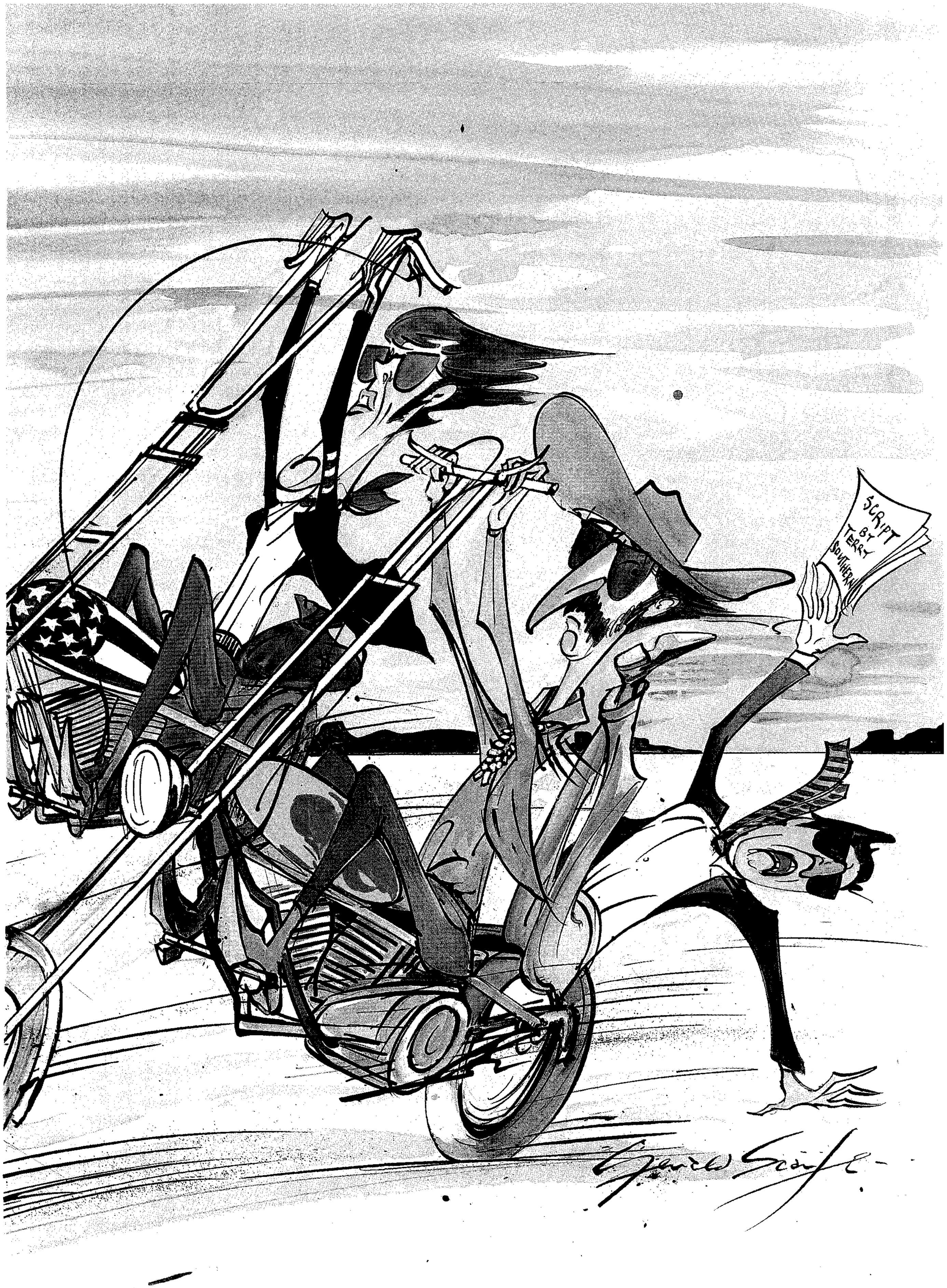
ONE morning a while back, I made a more perplexing than illuminating pilgrimage to Chelsea Mini-Storage, a warehouse on the West Side of Manhattan that, for the time being, is the repository of the papers of the novelist and screenwriter Terry Southern. Since Southern's death, not quite three years ago, at seventy-one, his only child, Nile, a diligent literary executor, has tried to find, for the right price, a proper final home for the Terry Southern archive. Eighteen institutions have declined stewardship thus far, and the only scholar who regularly visits the archive is a New York University doctoral candidate. Because Nile lives in Colorado, the graduate student, David Tully, guided me to the archive's present domicile, a corrugated-steel locker on the warehouse's third floor.

Southern's most accomplished novel was "The Magic Christian" (1959), a deftly deadpan homage to the art of the put-on, but he was actually best known for the innocently pornographic comic romp "Candy" (1958), which he wrote with Mason Hoffenberg. I'd gone to the warehouse, however, not to peruse manuscripts of these signature works but to retrieve a copy of the screenplay of "Easy Rider," the filming of which concluded thirty years ago this month. When the movie was released, in 1969, Southern shared the writing credit with Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper, the lead actors. For this, they received an Academy Award nomination. Besides making American cinema history, the movie made several parties—Fonda and Hopper, as well as its investors and distributor—a lot of money. Southern was not among the profit participants; his compensation came to less than four thousand dollars. Hopper, guided by elusive logic, has maintained for several years that Southern had virtually nothing to do with the creation of "Easy Rider." Would the storage locker yield evidence to the contrary? Though it was packed with dozens of cartons containing unproduced screenplays, screenplay treatments, novel manuscripts, legal and financial records, and random ephemera—such as a manila envelope with losing lottery tickets and nude photographs of a supermodel who was a pal of Southern's—I found no "Easy Rider" script.

It turned out that Nile had, inadvertently, misled me—the original was secured in a bank safe-deposit box rather than at Chelsea Mini-Storage—and he soon dispatched a photocopy of the so-called Fifty-fifth Street draft. In a phone conversation a few days later, Nile told me that Bloomsbury, a London firm, had agreed to publish the Fifty-fifth Street draft. This decision, part of a campaign to burnish Southern's reputation, struck me as being entirely in character with the nebulous mythology that all along has enveloped "Easy Rider." Terry Southern died broke. Certain aspects of his life and work now seem a blueprint for how not to plot the arc of one's leave-taking and legacy. That his son kept the screenplay stashed



"Easy Rider" seemed


SCRIPT
BY
TERRY
SOUTHERN

rald better American movies. But the homegrown auteurs displayed startling capacities for self-destruction.

in a safe-deposit box implied that he regarded it as—what? Confirmation that his father had been unjustly denied a payday that might have forestalled his dissipation? Tangible proof of a talent that might still be redeemed?

And it's not difficult to make the case that he possessed a genuine and rare gift. Michael O'Donoghue proposed that "if there was a Mt. Rushmore of modern American humor, Terry Southern would be the mountain they carve it on." Gore Vidal's bottom-line appraisal: "Terry Southern is the most profoundly witty writer of our generation." In 1958, the same year that "Candy" appeared, Southern published his first solo novel, "Flash and Filigree," an antic piece of grotesquerie whose protagonist was a depraved dermatologist. The following year brought "The Magic Christian," a series of outrageous scenarios from the files of one Guy Grand, the ultimate practical joker—in Nelson Algren's estimation, "the most profoundly satiric and wildly comic account of our life and times in years." After this early surge of industry and acclaim, however, Southern produced, over the next thirty-five years, only three books: "Red-Dirt Marijuana and Other Tastes" (1967), a collection of short stories, essays, and journalism; "Blue Movie" (1970), a one-joke novel, albeit a well-delivered joke, about the possibility of making an Oscar-worthy porn film; and "Texas Summer," a slender autobiographical novel rooted in Southern's boyhood, which was published in 1991 and quickly disappeared.

During this time, Southern wasn't unproductive. In 1963, he took a detour from what he called "the Quality Lit game" and headed for Hollywood. Peter Sellers is perhaps partly responsible. He bought a hundred copies of "The Magic Christian" and distributed them to friends, including Stanley Kubrick, who hired Southern to work on the film adaptation of a Peter George novel, "Red Alert." Southern deserves much of the credit for the metamorphosis of "Red Alert" from a Cold War melodrama to Kubrick's deranged masterpiece "Dr. Strangelove." His other screenwriting credits included "The Loved One," "The Cincinnati Kid," and "Barbarella," all produced during the sixties, the only decade when his bank account was flush.

The last twenty-five years of his life, Southern was dogged by fiscal insolvency and, in particular, by the Internal Revenue Service, which was unamused by his disinclination to file tax returns. There's no fresh moral here, Hollywood and the I.R.S. being no more the proximate cause of his undoing than was his unapologetic appetite for alcohol and whatever stimulants happened to be handy. One October day in 1995, climbing a flight of stairs on the Columbia University campus en route to teach a screenwriting class, he collapsed. For four days, he lingered in a hospital, his calcified lungs and his heart failing. According to Nile, his final question was "What's the delay?"

AUNT LÉONIE'S
Madeleines
NEW
LOWER SODIUM
AUNT LÉONIE'S
Madeleines
NO FAT
NO CHOLESTEROL
T. HACHTMAN

VIEWED with three decades of hindsight, "Easy Rider" remains, as ever, less noteworthy for its aesthetic merits or shortcomings than for its import as a social artifact. Is it simplistic to describe the movie's story line as simplistic? Two bikers score a big bundle of cash in a dope deal and head off on a cross-country ride—that's it. The more laconic and romantic of the pair, Wyatt (Fonda), a.k.a. Captain America, has stars and stripes painted on his helmet and on the gas tank of his Harley-Davidson and an American flag sewn on the back of his black leather jacket. Hopper's character, the paranoia-prone Billy, wears fringed buckskin. Wyatt and Billy—get it? At night, around the campfire, they smoke paralyzing amounts of marijuana and say "Hey, man" and "Think I'm gonna crash, man." Then it's up in the morning and back on the road, seeking new adventures in solipsism. From Los Angeles to New Orleans, during Mardi Gras, they keep moving, aiming for Florida and early retirement. For the audience, there's a civics pop quiz in the next-to-last scene, a final campfire. Wyatt informs Billy, "We blew it"—a line that's been subjected to Talmudic scrutiny ever since. Had the country, its Manifest Destiny long since fulfilled, made a corrupt bargain by squandering its ideals? Had Wyatt and Billy blown it because they were equally tainted, having enriched themselves through a criminal enterprise? And what was the moral significance of the dénouement, when they get literally blown away by a shotgun-toting pair of redneck cretins? Certainly not a happy ending—but did it qualify as tragedy?

In Fonda's recently published five-hundred-page memoir/doorstop, "Don't Tell Dad," he recounts the precise moment that the inspiration for "Easy Rider" came to him. To promote "The Trip," a Roger Corman feature about psychedelics, he attended a motion-picture distributors' convention in Toronto in September, 1967. One evening, in his motel room, while he was smoking a joint and signing publicity photos, he found himself staring at a glossy from one of Corman's most successful ventures, a biker movie called "The Wild Angels." Mirabile dictu: "I understood immediately just what kind of motorcycle, sex, and drug movie I should make next. It would not be about one hundred Hell's Angels on their way to a funeral. It would be about the Duke and Jeffrey Hunter looking for Natalie Wood. I would be the Duke and Hopper would be my Ward Bond; America would be our Natalie Wood."

Fonda envisioned himself as the producer and Hopper as the director, and when he described his idea for the film Hopper responded with gusto. ("That's great, man! Fucking great!") Hopper had been a studio contract player since the mid-fifties—he appeared with James Dean in "Giant" and in "Rebel Without a Cause"—and had along the way acquired a reputation as an irascible narcissist and, by Old Hollywood standards, a pain to work with. But Fonda had been impressed by Hopper's skill as a photographer and by work he'd done directing second-unit scenes for "The Trip."

A few weeks after his revelation, Fonda went to France to act in a film directed by his then brother-in-law, Roger Vadim. One day, Southern showed up, having arrived from Rome, where he'd done script-doctoring on Vadim's previous and as yet unfinished picture, "Barbarella." Over lunch, Fonda writes, he described to Southern his gestating idea.

Southern: "Just what are you and Den-Den going to do with it?"

Fonda: "We want to find a writer to help us put it into script form."

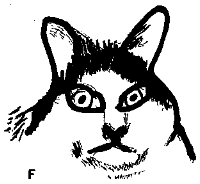
"Well, I'm your man."

"Terry, your fee is the same as the budget, man."

"No, no, no. You don't get it! It's the most commercial story I have ever heard. And a real pip of an ending! I'm your man!"

From this point on, the tale of how "Easy Rider" came into existence resembles "Rashomon." When the dust settles, though, Southern is definitely the odd man out. Initially, Fonda and Hopper called their story "The Loners"; another possibility was "Mardi Gras." It was Southern who suggested "Easy Rider"—a term for a man who, while not necessarily a pimp, is supported by a prostitute. The title, Hopper later claimed, was the sum of Southern's contribution.

Late in the fall, Fonda, Hopper, and Southern met in New York to plot out the narrative. Also present during these consultations was a typist, whose task was to transcribe Southern's longhand scribblings. Fonda recalls a pivotal session with a tape recorder, during which, scene by scene, he recited the story. After the transcription, this was edited to twenty-one pages, more akin to a treatment than to a screenplay. (The whereabouts of the tape and the pages is, naturally, no longer known.)



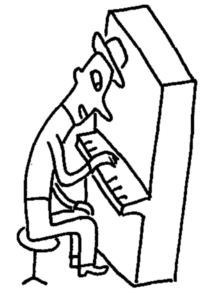
Fonda formally incorporated his own production entity, Pando Company, and he and Hopper soon found their way to Raybert Productions, whose principals, Bob Rafelson and Bert Schneider, had got rich hatching "The Monkees," the television series that starred the kitschy featherweight Beatles knockoffs. Schneider listened to Fonda's pitch and the tape, was told that the picture would cost three hundred and sixty thousand dollars, and agreed to put up all the money and find a distributor. In exchange, Raybert would own two-thirds of "Easy Rider." As one participant recalled, the one-third that Fonda and Hopper retained was to be divided equally between them and Southern.

Before any real writing got done, Southern discussed with Fonda and Hopper the need to come up with a "mouthpiece"—a figure who could indirectly do the talking for the less than articulate Wyatt and Billy. Thus was born the character of George Hanson, a civil-liberties lawyer whom Wyatt and Billy meet when they're tossed into a small-town Texas jail on a minor, trumped-up charge. A go-along-to-get-along son of the establishment, Hanson shares Wyatt and Billy's cell while sleeping off a hangover. During their subsequent travels together—basically, Act II of "Easy Rider"—the film comes most vividly to life, thanks in large measure to a deliciously artful performance by a previously obscure actor who went on to become the same Jack Nicholson who now sits in the front row at the Academy Awards ceremonies and Los Angeles Lakers games.

In the beginning, Fonda and Hopper had talked about Rip Torn for the role of Hanson, a casting choice that suited Southern fine. He and Torn, a fellow-Texan, had met in 1964 during the making of "The Cincinnati Kid" and they eventually became close friends. Because Torn had a firmly established track record as both a film and a stage actor, however, he balked when, like everyone involved with "Easy Rider," he was asked to work for a union-scale salary. Negotiations over his fee were unresolved when he decided instead to do a Broadway play, a decision that haunted him for many years. (The play, "The Cuban Thing," by Jack Gelber, received mixed reviews from critics—and rather harsher treatment from a Cuban exile group, which bombed the theatre during previews—and it closed after opening night.) At the urging of Rafelson and Schneider, Hopper agreed to cast Nicholson as Hanson.

The first footage to be shot, even before a coherent script existed, was a series of scenes set during Mardi Gras, in February, 1968. Somehow, Fonda miscalculated by a month the date of Mardi Gras, a gaffe that allowed very little time to assemble a film crew and cope with other logistical concerns. From the moment the crew arrived in New Orleans, chaos prevailed. It rarely seemed clear who was responsible for what; three cinematographers were present, for instance, and at different moments each was assured that he was the first cameraman. The day that shooting began, Hopper gathered all concerned in a parking lot and subjected them to a bewildering harangue. "This is my fucking movie! And nobody's going to take my fucking movie away from me!" Fonda recalls him shouting repeatedly. According to the actress Karen Black, who portrayed one of a pair of prostitutes who take an LSD trip with Wyatt and Billy, Southern observed Hopper's tedious histrionics and told him, "The cacophony of your verbiage is driving me insane." Over the next week or so, sixteen hours of film were exposed, several people quit, and at least one television-heaving brawl erupted. Already it had all become too much for Southern, who by the time he returned to New York had decided to put some distance between himself and the production.

Did Southern realize, at that juncture, that he was abandoning his equity in "Easy Rider"? Maybe—it's hard to tell. While he could be excused for assuming he wasn't walking away from Golconda, the circumstances fit an unfortunate pattern: his business acumen, it seemed, existed in inverse proportion to his artistic ability. The most practiced student of this phenomenon was his former wife, Carol (mother of Nile), who maintained a cordial relationship with him and was speaking in a fond tone when she told me, "It was very hard to help Terry. You would send him papers and he wouldn't sign them. He was maddeningly difficult for an agent to work with. It's almost as if he had a perverse desire not to make money. The fact that he became so well known so quickly, that his writing struck such a chord with so many people, was overwhelming to him. I think unconsciously he might have felt he wasn't worth it."



As it happened, Fonda, too, had found the New Orleans debacle so dispiriting that he was prepared to return forty thousand dollars advanced by Raybert. When he went to see Bert Schneider, however, the discussion took an unexpected turn. Schneider had already arranged distribution of "Easy Rider" through Columbia Pictures. In a manner that would later make Schneider seem extraordinarily prescient, he contended that Hopper hadn't had adequate time to prepare in New Orleans, and deserved another chance. Once production resumed, with a fresh crew, Schneider predicted, Dennis would settle into a semblance of professionalism.

Fonda had asked along to the meeting one of his oldest friends—Bill Hayward, the son of the legendary agent Leland Hayward and, coincidentally, Hopper's brother-in-law. (Hopper was married, at least for the moment, to Hayward's sister, Brooke.) If the film had a chance of getting made, Hayward figured, he might as well get involved, as a producer. By the time the meeting ended, Hayward recalls, Southern's interest had been divided equally between himself and Pando Company, Fonda's production firm.

Hopper, when he learned of this, howled that he'd been betrayed—a portion of Southern's share should have gone to him, he argued—and insisted he wouldn't proceed without a written contract. Previously, all "Easy Rider" business arrangements had been oral understandings. Now Hayward drafted a memorandum specifying how much Hopper would receive for his labors as a director and an actor. A similar document was prepared for Fonda. Neither memorandum said anything about their services as writers. In New Orleans, there had been no shooting script—just "eight or nine pages," Hayward said, to provide some dialogue for actresses who auditioned for the roles of the two prostitutes. Indeed, according to Hayward, "Dennis loved the idea of shooting without a script"—and would presumably have continued in an improvisational mode the rest of the way—"but the New Orleans thing made it so obvious to me you had to have one."

What happened next? Memories warp and blur, but what's clear is that Southern applied his energies during the spring of 1968 to the "Easy Rider" screenplay—evidence of which is the Fifty-fifth Street draft. Southern was born in Alvarado, Texas, near Dallas, and left for good in 1943, when he joined the Army. Courtesy of the G.I. Bill, he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne. After spending several years in Europe and New York, he developed a vaguely British inflection stirred with a clipped hipster archness. But the parochial American vernacular, Texas style, was his mother tongue. The screenplay is unquestionably Southern's handiwork, distinguished by detailed scene descriptions and by dialogue with a crispness and rhythm familiar to any reader of his fiction. Hanson's loopy and lyrical monologues ("Venusians are meeting with individuals in *all walks of life*"), preserved nearly intact from the Fifty-fifth Street draft through the final cut, seem exemplary specimens of Southern's perfect pitch. Yet only a partial overlap exists between the Fifty-fifth Street draft and what eventually appeared onscreen; many passages in the script are absent from the movie, and vice versa.

Fonda recalls daily sessions attended by all three principals, and he describes Southern's contribution to the process as "keeping it on track, keeping the story flowing properly, making shooting notes, narrative directives." Once again, a typist transcribed Southern's yellow legal pads. It's the impression of Hayward, who strikes me as the most dispassionate surviving witness, that "Easy Rider" was written by "three fucking loaded guys in a room. . . . Somebody has the pencil and piece of paper, and that somebody wrote it all down. Dennis's position is he had the piece of paper. I would tend to believe that Terry would more likely have had the piece of paper than Dennis would."

A fee for Southern was negotiated: three hundred and fifty dollars a week for ten weeks, and no profit share. "After the movie became an enormous success, lots of people got compensated," Hayward said. "Bert Schneider gave little pieces to Jack Nicholson, to his secretary, the editor, the assistant editor. All these people got tastes, and the only person who didn't get a taste was Terry Southern. He deserved it before all those other people. I always thought this thing never would have got written without him."

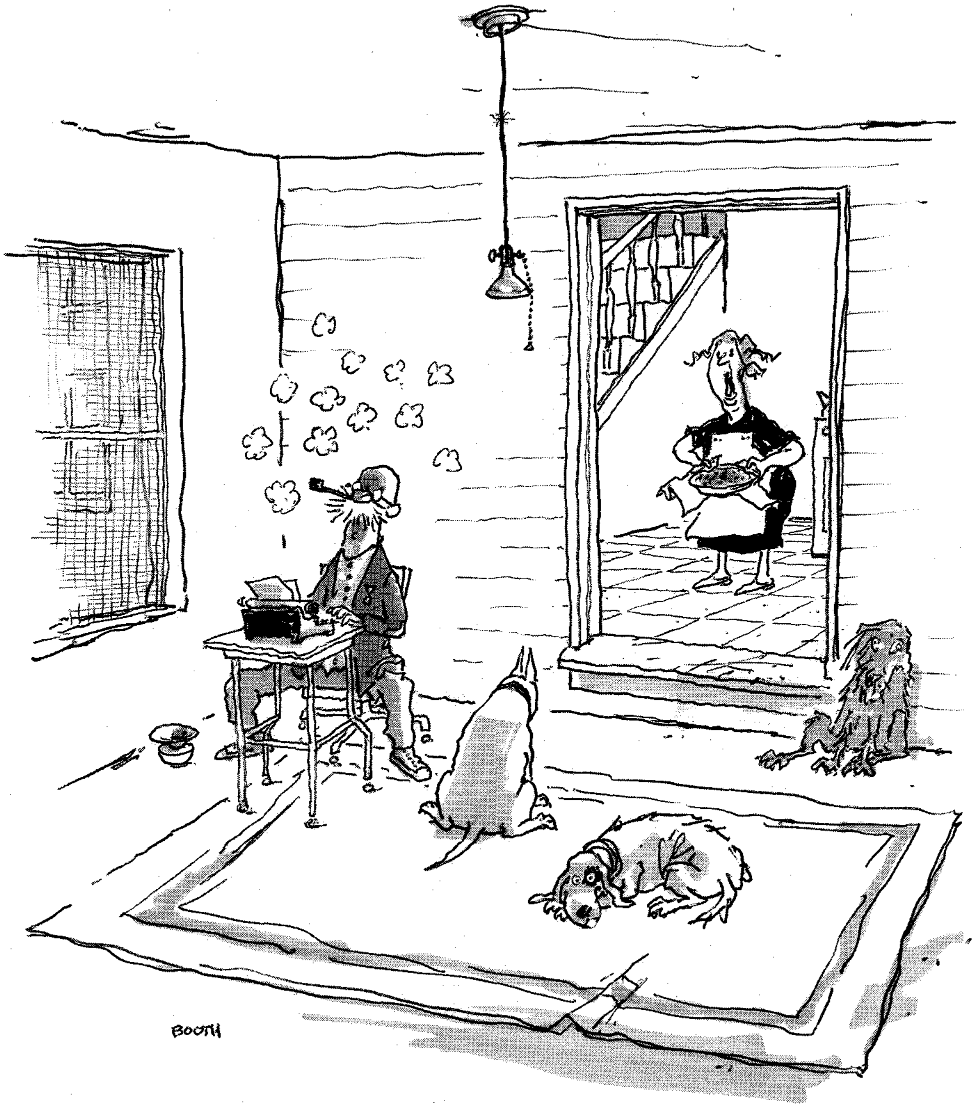
When the "Easy Rider" crew went back on the road, in April of 1968, Southern stayed in New York, where he'd begun working on his next projects, a screen adaptation of John Barth's novel "The End of the Road" and his own novel and potential film, "Blue Movie." The principal photography of "Easy Rider" concluded in June and an inordinately protracted editing process began. As this dragged on, into the winter of 1969, it became evident that Columbia Pictures, the distributing studio, didn't really know what it had on its hands. Schneider, his enthusiasm undiminished, never vacillated, insisting that "Easy Rider" travel to the festival at Cannes, where, in May, 1969, it won a prize as best film by a new director. Two months later, it opened in New York and, of course, made an immediate and resounding impact.

Just as it goes without saying that if Southern had seen this coming he never would have yielded his profit participation, it's equally unlikely that he would have agreed to a request from Fonda and Hopper, a few months before the picture's release, that he share official credit for the screenplay. Under the rules of the Writers Guild of America, any time a director or a producer applies for a credit the matter is automatically subject to arbitration, a protocol designed to protect writers against strong-arm tactics. In this instance, Southern apparently interceded with the guild to expedite the matter. Why? One theory is that this gesture was consistent with his generous-spirited nature. And, after all, this took place during that extended interval in the culture when relationships were vague and messy by choice, when people who hung out together and generated ideas together tended not to dwell upon the power dynamics of their alliances. In other words, the sixties weren't the eighties or the nineties. The story idea had unquestionably come from Fonda, the writing process had been a true collaboration, Fonda and Hopper wanted to make more movies, and if a writing credit would help them arrange future financing . . . hey, these guys were friends, right?

SI LITVINOFF, a lawyer who was Southern's business manager and consigliere for several years, told me not long ago, "Terry liked hanging out, he liked talking, he had friends everywhere. And he liked money, but it wasn't something he ever thought about—only when somebody put pressure on him." A year after "Easy Rider," he wrote Hopper, confessing an alarming degree of pressure:

> Dear Den:
>
> I'm very sorry to bug you, Den, but I'm in a terrible bind—completely strapped, an inch, maybe less, from disasterville. If I were alone, I would never hit on you (not my style, Den) like this, but I have Nile and Carol to take care of—in the face of recent monstro financial reverses, and no relief in sight.
>
> In view of such circumstance, and of our (yours and mine) solid ancient friendship, and of great success of ER, could you please put a single point of its action my way?
>
> I'm aware there may be a difference in our notions of who contributed what to the film (memory flash highly selective in these cases), but the other day I was looking through a copy of the original 55th Street script that we did together, and was amazed at the amount and strength of the material which went from there intact to silver-screen.
>
> Please consider it, Den—I'm in very bad trouble. Thanks.

Hopper says he can't remember getting the letter—in any case, he never gave Southern a share. Southern's troubles with the I.R.S. were the main source of his "monstro financial reverses." In time, with penalties and accumulated interest, his I.R.S. debt approached three hundred thousand dollars. The government, taking advantage of the fact that he and Carol, who had been living apart for years, hadn't got around to the formality of a divorce, seized a bank account in which she'd deposited a substantial inheritance from her father. Somehow, Southern remained permanently tethered to the movie business, but never in a particularly salubrious way. After selling the movie rights to "Candy," he wrote an early draft of the screenplay but bailed out when he realized that the director had no devotion to the spirit of the novel. A film version of "The Magic Christian" was produced in England, but, as happened with "Candy," it was done in a way that made him want to disavow any connection. Occasional screenwriting commissions turned up—the cache of unproduced scripts in the Southern archive indicates that he never stopped writing—but the elements never coalesced



"Start with a Spanish doubloon. Those are always good."

in the right place at the right time.

"A lot of oddball types have hired me to develop their film projects," Southern once wrote, "and surely the oddest of them was Althea Flynt, wife of the outlandish publisher of *Hustler* mag, to do a film about Jim Morrison." In an oral history published in *Grand Street* in 1990, seven years after the fact, Southern explained that he got involved because Hopper, of all people, had recruited him: "Den Hopper called me from Larry Flynt's: 'I've sent you a first-class round-trip ticket and I want you to come out. I have a proposition for you. Take my word, it's a good thing. I'll meet the plane.' And so I went out without knowing anything except that Den had recommended it.... Den tells me, 'We'll write the script together. I already asked them for twenty-five thousand dollars apiece up front.' And he hands me this envelope of hundred-dollar bills *that* thick: 'Here, here's yours. I'll show you mine—see, they're the same.' "

This vignette illustrated, implicitly, that nursing a grudge didn't come naturally to Southern. There was one episode, during the early nineties, when a sequel to "Easy Rider" was being contemplated and a lawyer acting in Southern's behalf did a little sabre-rattling. Otherwise, like his picaresque heroine Candy, the naïf who hated to say no, he resisted looking back in anger. The same could hardly be said for Hopper, who on two occasions twenty-five years apart hauled Fonda into court, alleging a claim to a share of Southern's original profit share. Four years ago, a legal tempest erupted in which Hopper found himself in the role of defendant rather than plaintiff.

On May 31, 1994, Hopper was a guest on the "Tonight Show," with Jay Leno. Because his appearance happened to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of "Easy Rider," Leno asked a few questions about the movie, including whether actors other than Jack Nicholson had been considered for the role of George Hanson. The two had a colloquy that Hopper no doubt came to regret:

Hopper: Well, yeah, Rip Torn, uh—

Leno: Rip Torn, he would have been good.

Hopper: Rip Torn would have been terrific, he would have been terrific.

Leno: He's like a crazy guy, yeah, yeah....

Hopper: Uh, yeah, Rip and I had a little, uh, problem, we had a little—

Leno: What kind of problem?

Hopper: Well, at dinner he pulled a knife

AMERICAN SUMMER-1971

POOL BUDDY

When I was in junior high school, we spent the whole summer at the pool. The coolest kids had tans in May; I don't know how they did it. In 1971, when I was fourteen, there was a kind of bikini that was the absolute butter—a little something held together at the hips and thorax by brass rings—and early that summer the most popular of the popular girls had circles of untanned skin underneath those rings, and they would pose themselves at poolside with the suits *twisted* a little, so you'd notice the circles of white skin. I was a redhead with blond eyelashes who freckled like a banana, and I could never manage a low trick like that. I sunbathed anyway, and there were only a couple of days when I'd actually turn that sickening purply red in the process and my mom would make a soda-and-calamine lotion and plaster it on me at night. If you were lucky, the reward for all that sun was that your hair would get streaks.

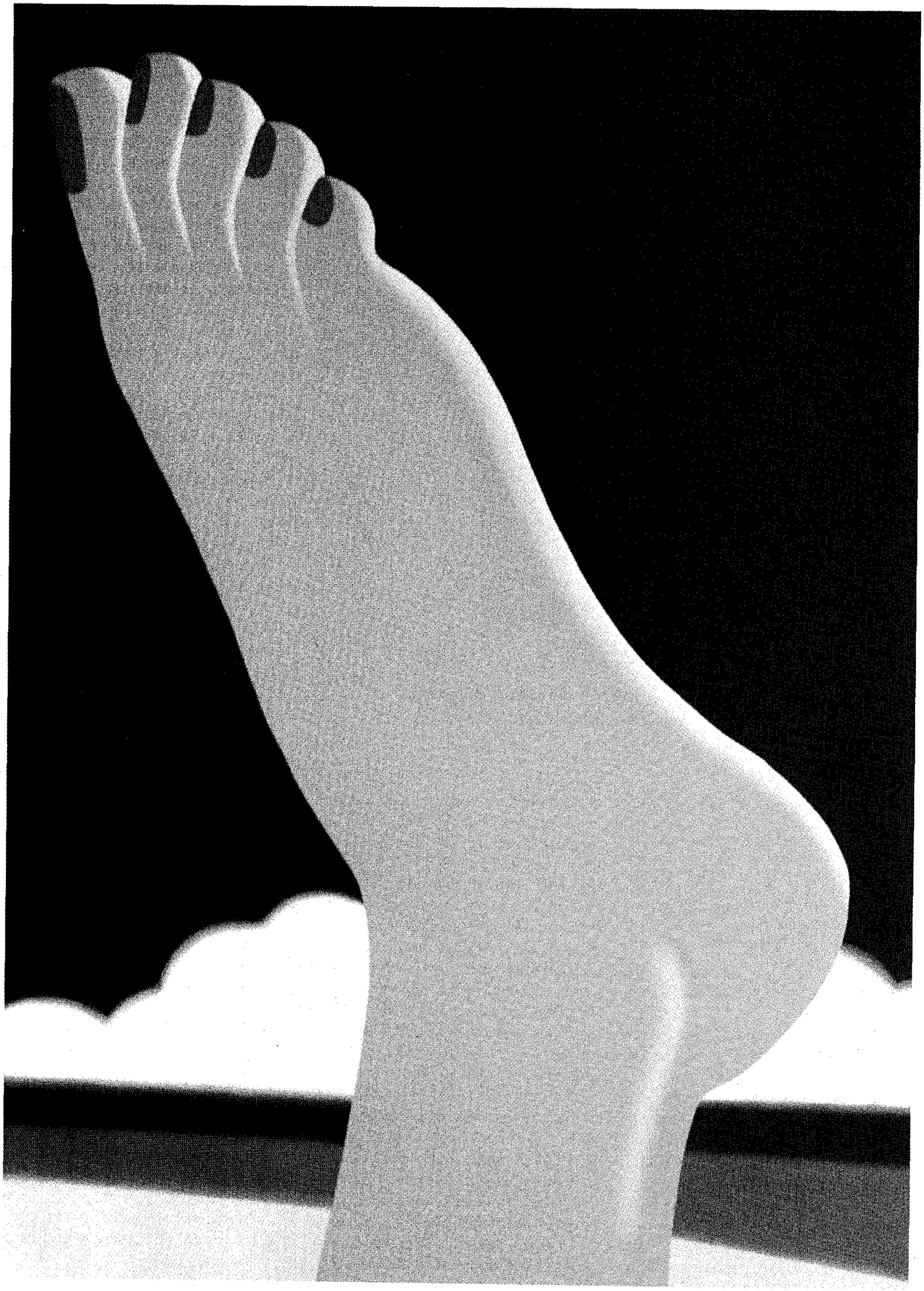
There was nothing special about our suburban pool, in Shaker Heights, Ohio. All summer, we girls lay horizontal, with the sunlight warm and pinkish on our closed eyes, and absorbed reassuring daily pool sounds: the shrieking lifeguard whistles, the unaccountable bursts of laughter, the grumbling P.A. announcements—"Free swim is *over!*"—and the soggy *kshpratshh!* of some fatso doing a last cannonball from the high board. All summer, we girls gave off two perfumes, subtly intermixed—the choky smell of chlorine in our hair and Coppertone suntan lotion everywhere else. Coppertone smelled exactly like coconut Daiquiris, only we didn't know it then.

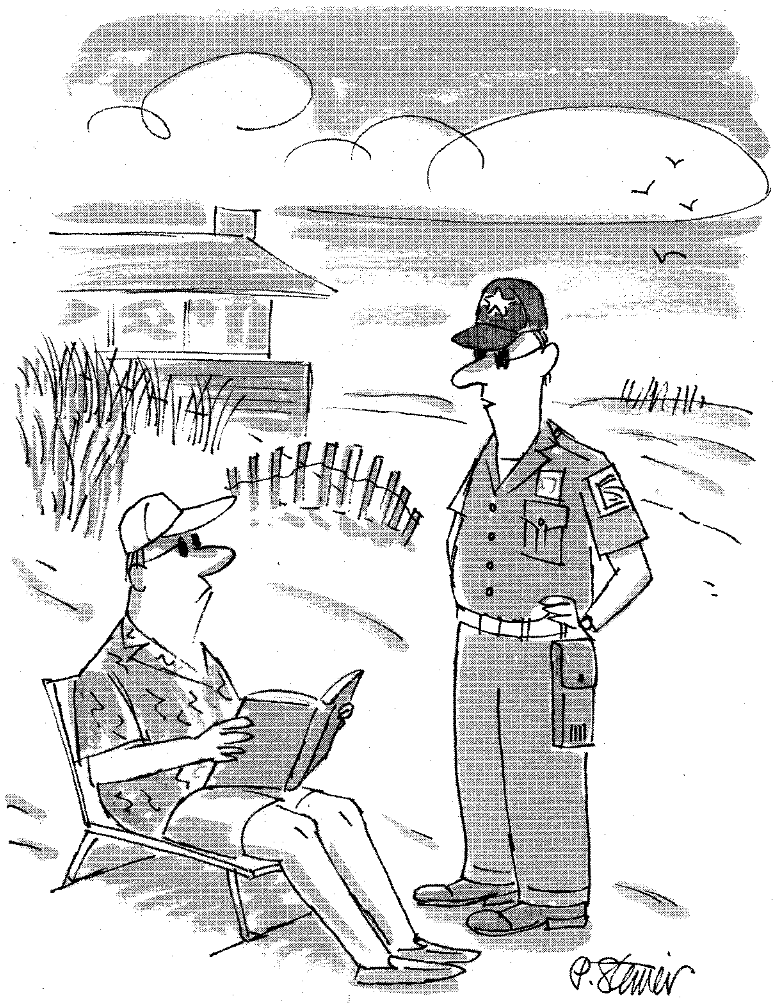
If you didn't have a summer boyfriend, you had to have a pool buddy. Going to the pool alone and just *being* there was too fraught and anxious; all of us moved in pairs or packs. As the school year wound down, I would start casting about for my pool partner, covertly comparing summer-camp schedules and family trips and registering who would be around and, like me, available. The summer of 1971, Norma Levy was my pool buddy, and we had a deal. One of us would call the other before heading off to the pool, and the other one had to be ready to leave at that same instant. Arriving together meant that neither of us ever had to emerge from the locker room alone, looking blinded and with her pallid skin glowing geekily. We never wanted to have to hunt around for a place to sit, or to approach a murmuring group and have no one in it yield an *inch* to make room for another towel. Together, Norma and I were safe. Each could count on the other to push her towel over to make room, and that way, side by side, with our towels touching, we had a raft, a cabana.

We shared our snack-bar money and poured Coppertone onto each other's back, and we vowed never to ditch the other just because some guy had begun to talk to one of us over by the water fountain and asked her why not come sit with him in the shade. I intended not to do that, but sometimes, on a particularly hot day, when the guy really did have a green towel spread out under the maple tree, up behind the diving boards, I just had to. We all knew that an afternoon date by the pool might not amount to much—might not even amount to a date the next afternoon. Still, it was worth it, even if it meant breaking faith with your pool buddy, because there was no summer moment more perfect than walking off past the diving board alongside someone cute like Randy Ginn and knowing that everyone else at the pool would see. Anyway, I knew Norma would have done it, too, given the chance, so in an instant I said a sheepish goodbye to her and headed off with him, leaving a dark imprint on the concrete where my wet towel had been, knowing that in another instant the sun would fade it away.

—Susan Orlean

"SEASCAPE #1" ©TOM WESSELMANN/VAGA, NY/COURTESY SIDNEY JANIS GALLERY





"I'm sorry, sir, but Dostoyevsky is not considered summer reading. I'll have to ask you to come with me."

• •

> on me. He thought I was—I was cutting him out of the picture, as he put it—uh, before, we were just writing it at the time, and he decided the script wasn't really correct.
>
> LENO: Now, is that the best way to settle an argument with a director? If he's cutting, I mean if he cut you out of the picture before—somehow knifing the director seems like it would pretty much end your—
>
> HOPPER: Yeah, well, it was, uh, it was, uh, it was one way for me to say we're not working together. That was pretty easy.

When Torn learned that this bit of drollery had been broadcast to ten million people, he was quite perturbed. Three weeks later, a lawyer representing him sent a letter to Hopper demanding a retraction. The lawyer, Robert S. Chapman, began gathering sworn statements from people who had been present during the event that Hopper was referring to—a contretemps in a restaurant in New York in late 1967 or early 1968. In a subsequent deposition, Southern described his initial reaction to Hopper's remarks: "I said, 'Well, that's supremely ironic, isn't it, that he should tell it exactly backwards?'" Southern and the other witnesses agreed that an unfriendly encounter had taken place but that Hopper, not Torn, had been the aggressor. They recalled Hopper jabbing a steak knife repeatedly at Torn before Torn disarmed him, employing some defensive maneuvers he had learned as a military policeman. (Fonda, who was also present, had a somewhat different memory and interpretation—of Torn and Hopper threatening each other, not very menacingly, with a butter knife and a salad fork.) Torn sued in August of 1994, claiming he'd been defamed and financially harmed by Hopper's malicious mendacity and asking for compensatory and punitive damages.

In Torn's lawsuit, the provenance of "Easy Rider" also emerged as a significant issue and the focus of his attack on Hopper's credibility. To piece together a defense, Hopper offered a unique account of the knife incident. He had arrived in New York and come to the restaurant fresh from a location-scouting trip through Texas—dangerous reconnaissance work for a scruffy longhair. Meanwhile, Fonda and Southern were supposed to be writing the screenplay. When Hopper learned they hadn't done any work in his absence, he took over the writing himself and completed the screenplay in less than three weeks.

Why had Torn pulled a knife on him? Because Torn had taken umbrage at disparaging remarks that Hopper made about Texas.

When Hopper was asked whether he thought Southern had committed perjury by declaring himself the author of "Easy Rider," he replied, "Yes."

Another question was "When it came to the physical writing, you did it all by yourself?"

Hopper's answer was "I did it myself."

And what was Hopper's reaction when he learned that Southern supported Torn's account of what had taken place in the restaurant? "It broke my heart. It broke my fucking heart. . . . Because I considered Terry Southern one of my best friends. I didn't understand it."

"What about a copy of the screenplay?" Robert Chapman inquired. Did Hopper have one?

"No" was the fatal reply. "I don't know that one exists, actually."

This set the stage for Chapman to introduce into evidence a copy of the Fifty-fifth Street draft—for Hopper, not precisely the brightest moment of the proceedings.

By the time the case went to trial, in Los Angeles Superior Court, in December, 1996, Southern had been reduced to a voice from the grave. (He had died more than a year earlier, still unrewarded for his contributions to "Easy Rider.") His pretrial deposition, however, remained part of the record. Along with a chance to offer his rendering of how the screenplay got written, the deposition enabled Southern to make clear where, in his estimation, matters stood between him and Hopper.

"Do you still consider Mr. Hopper a good friend?" Southern was asked.

"No, not at all."

"When did you reach the conclusion that he was not a good friend?"

"Well, it was a cumulative thing of being refused time after time of beseeching his help. And I guess it was the proverbial last straw, you know."

In March, 1997, the Torn-Hopper trial concluded with the judicial finding that "not a single witness nor piece of evidence supported Hopper's story that Torn pulled a knife on him" and that, on balance, "Hopper was not a credible witness." Ordered to pay Torn four hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, plus court costs, Hopper petitioned the Court of Appeal of the State of California. Earlier this year, it upheld the award in favor of Torn. That, along with Hopper's legal fees, adds up to more than a million dollars.

BEFORE a large audience in Houston, in 1983, Hopper as performance artist sat in a device called the Russian Suicide Death Chair, surrounded by twenty sticks of dynamite. After they detonated, he walked away. "I'd seen this in Kansas when I was a kid, about seven years old," he said. "Because dynamite won't blow in on itself, if you just keep your head down you'll be O.K., like in the eye of a hurricane." In fact, despite surviving this especially spectacular flirtation with self-annihilation, Hopper was far from O.K., and during the next two years he did rotations through a psychiatric hospital and two drug-and-alcohol rehabilitation programs. Hopper's most impressive stunt, of course, has been surviving not drugs, alcohol, and dynamite but his very nature.

Recently, I went to see Hopper in Venice, California, where he lives with his fifth wife, Victoria Duffy, in a group of structures designed by Frank Gehry and Brian Murphy that bear a superficial resemblance to the interior of Chelsea Mini-Storage. The buildings brim with art—works by Rauschenberg, Christo, Serra, Duchamp, Salle, Beuys, Warhol, Oldenburg, Irwin, Kienholz, Basquiat, Scharf, and Schnabel, along with no shortage of Hopper's own photographs and paintings. Before Hopper showed me around, we engaged in some diverting chitchat. He plays a lot of golf these days, hasn't drunk alcohol or ingested an unhealthy drug since 1984, and happily voted for Reagan and Bush. "I'm a great Gingrich fan," he said at one point. "I think he's terrific."

In 1994, the "Easy Rider" profit participants were bought out by Columbia, which is now owned by Sony Pictures. By that point, the film had grossed, depending upon the source, between forty million and sixty million dollars. And how much, I asked Hopper, had he earned from "Easy Rider" across the years? "Over all, I don't see how I could have made more than a couple of million," he said. He made it sound like chump change. With the Columbia transaction consummated, and his legal skirmishes with Fonda also resolved, Hopper apparently sees no reason to back away from the same story he's been telling all along. Hollywood is a place where the truth has never been a highly valued commodity. Seated on a soft black leather sofa in a loftlike room next to his kitchen, Hopper sipped coffee and said, in an affable tone, "Everyone else's memory is tainted. . . . Terry Southern didn't write any of the screenplay of 'Easy Rider.' I wrote it."

IN a recently published chronicle of cinema in the seventies, "Easy Riders, Raging Bulls," Peter Biskind, paraphrasing Buck Henry, notes that "Easy Rider" was "authorless, the automatic handwriting of the counterculture." For a while, at least, "Easy Rider" and the style of independent filmmaking it heralded seemed capable of cleansing Hollywood of obsolete hierarchies and truly making American movies more daring, more interesting, better. But the homegrown auteurs, more often than not, displayed startling capacities for self-destruction, and Southern, having been present at the creation, was plainly no exception. Post-"Easy Rider," he grabbed work where he could, though evidently not with any overriding sense of direction. In his last years, when he had a bout with colon cancer, followed by a stroke, he accepted charity from friends who, charmed by his humor and courtly style, did what they could to preserve his delicate pride. (His job teaching screenwriting at Columbia provided only a modest income.) Much of Southern's most imaginative and entertaining writing during this period of decline, it seems, turned up in letters to friends. Peter Matthiessen, who says that a Southern story from the fifties, "The Accident," helped to inspire the founding of *The Paris Review*, told me recently that he thought Southern had lost the energy and discipline to persevere as a serious writer. "I don't believe there was much more work he wished to do," Matthiessen said. "He was an observer and a commentator on modern life, and he had this quirky take on things. He was one of the founders of that school of irony—that cool style—and when he had a big splash with 'Dr. Strangelove' that irreverent, obstreperous take on things was all very startling and new. But, after that, everybody was into outrage. Terry's style became diffused throughout the culture, and I think he'd already said what he had to say."

Somehow, the spectacle of a writer running out of gas tends to diminish our regard for how he once put words together. Though being dead inevitably has its inconveniences, premature demise has always enjoyed cachet as a smart career move—a way of crowding into the elevator with Keats, Crane, and Kafka. Long-playing torment, on the other hand, merely haunts.

Of late, Nile Southern has been awaiting a response from the I.R.S. to an "offer in compromise"—an attempt to get his father's estate out of hock by offering the government a lump-sum payment of ten thousand dollars. In notes for a memoir that Southern never got around to completing, he abandoned any pretense of good will toward Hopper, maintaining that Hopper hadn't understood his own movie: "Dennis, who has made many public pronouncements about the film, actually never had a clue as to its real intent: an indictment of the bigoted American redneck. When he saw the ending I had written, he implored me not 'to kill 'em off.' 'We gotta save at least one of them!' he kept saying. He just didn't have a clue." Perhaps not. And yet Hopper's example demonstrates that if one's goal is to utter the last word, being alive offers a distinct advantage. ♦

FICTION

SAVE THE REAPER

Can you trust your children with your mother?

BY ALICE MUNRO

THE game Eve was playing with her daughter Sophie's children was almost the same one that she had played with Sophie on long, dull car trips when Sophie was a little girl. Then the game was spies—now it was aliens. Sophie's children were in the back seat. Daisy was barely three and could not understand what was going on. Philip was seven, and in control. He was the one who picked the car they were to follow, in which there were newly arrived space travellers on their way to the secret headquarters, the invaders' lair. The aliens got their directions from the signals sent by plausible-looking people in other cars, or from somebody standing by a mailbox or even riding a tractor in a field. Many aliens had already arrived on Earth and been translated—this was Philip's word—so that anybody might be one: gas-station attendants or women pushing baby carriages or even the babies riding in the carriages.

Eve ventured to say that they might have to switch from following one vehicle to following another, because some were only decoys, not heading for the hideaway at all but leading you astray.

"No, that isn't it," said Philip. "What they do, they suck the people out of one car into another car, just in case anybody is following. They go into different people all the time, and the people never know what was in them."

"Really?" Eve said. "So how do we know which car?"

"The code's on the license plate," Philip said.

He sat as far forward as he could with his seat belt on, tapping his teeth sometimes in urgent concentration and making light whistling noises as he cautioned her.

"Uh-uh, watch out here," he said. "I think you're going to have to turn around. Yeah. Yeah. I think this may be it."

They had been following a white Mazda and were now, apparently, to follow an old green pickup truck, a Ford. Eve said, "Are you sure?"

"Sure."

What Eve had originally planned was to have the headquarters turn out to be in the village store that sold ice cream. But Philip had taken charge so thoroughly that now it was hard to manage the outcome. The pickup truck was turning off the paved county road onto a gravelled side road. It was a decrepit truck with no topper, its body eaten by rust—it would not be going far. Home to some farm, most likely. They might not meet another vehicle to switch to before the destination was reached.

"You're positive this is it?" said Eve. "It's only one man by himself, you know. I thought they never travelled alone."

"The dog," said Philip.

For there was a dog riding in the open back of the truck, running back and forth from one side to the other as if there were events to be kept track of everywhere.

"The dog's one, too."

EVE had come home from the village the day before laden with provisions. The village store was actually a classy supermarket these days. You could find almost anything—coffee, wine, rye bread without caraway seeds because Philip hated caraway, a ripe melon, fresh shrimp for Sophie, the dark cherries they all loved though Daisy had to be watched with the stones, a tub of chocolate-fudge ice cream, and all the regular things to keep them going for another week.

Sophie was clearing up the children's lunch. "Oh," she cried. "Oh, what'll we do with all that stuff?"

Ian had phoned, she said. Ian had phoned to say he was flying in to Toronto tomorrow. Work on his book had progressed more quickly than he had expected, so he had changed his plans. Instead of waiting for the three weeks to be up, he was coming tomorrow to collect Sophie and the children and take them on a little trip. He wanted to go to Quebec City. He had never been there, and he thought the children should see the part of Canada where people spoke French.

"He got lonesome," Philip said.

Sophie laughed. She said, "Yes. He got lonesome for us."

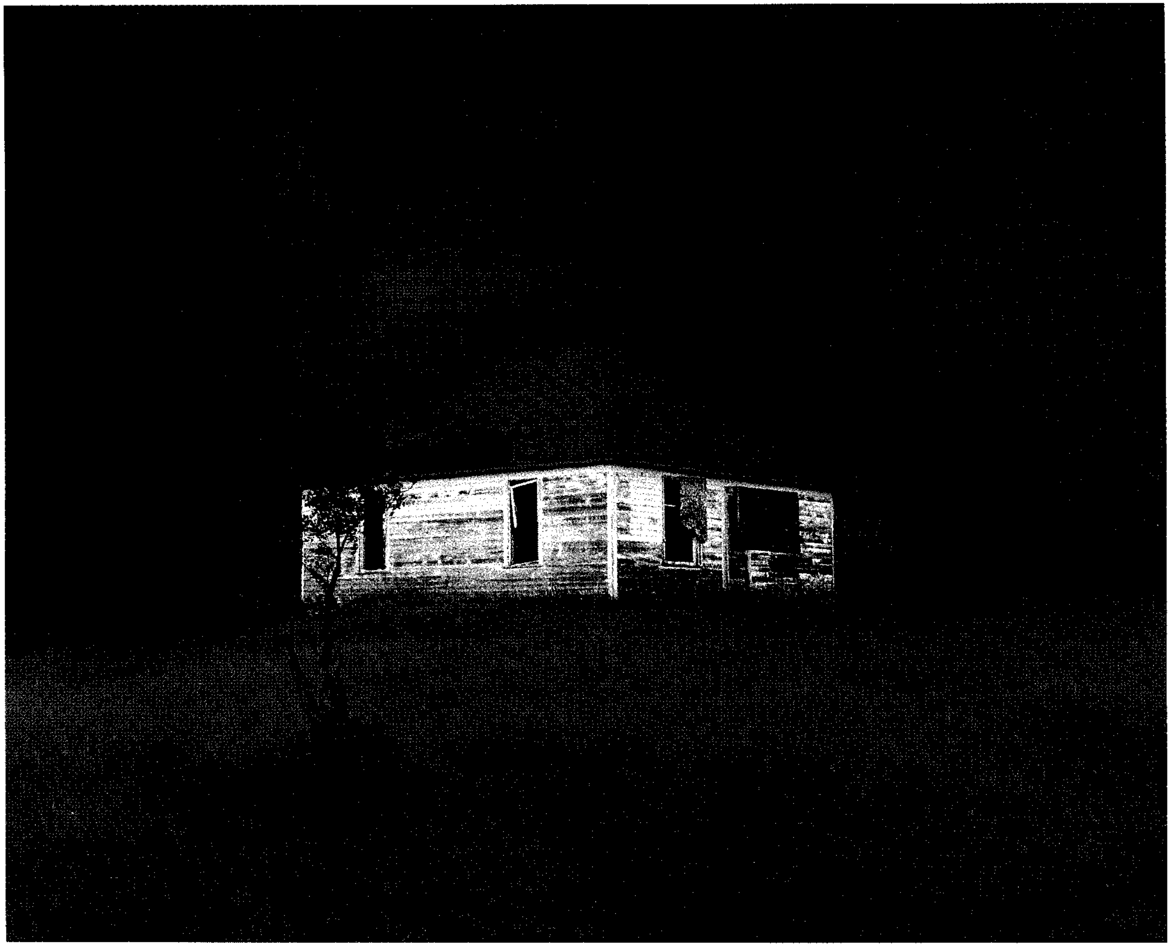
Twelve days, Eve thought. Twelve days had passed of the three weeks. She had had to take the house for a month. It was a cramped little house, fixed up on the cheap for summer rental. Eve's idea had been to get a lakeside cottage for the holiday—Sophie and Philip's first visit with her in nearly five years and Daisy's first ever. She had settled on this stretch of the Lake Huron shore because her parents used to bring her here, with her brother, when they were children. Things had changed—the cottages were all like suburban houses, and the rents were out of sight. This house, half a mile inland from the rocky, unfavored north end of the usable beach, had been the best she could manage. It stood in the middle of a cornfield. She had told the children what her father had once told her—that at night you could hear the corn growing. When she took the sheets off the line she had to shake out the corn bugs.

Sophie said that she and Ian and the children would drive to Quebec City in the rented car, then drive straight back to the Toronto airport, where the car was to be turned in. No mention of Eve's going along. There wasn't room in the rented car. But couldn't she have taken her own car? Ian could take the children, if he was so lonesome for them, give Sophie a rest. Eve and Sophie could ride together, as they used to in the summer, travelling to towns they had never seen before, where Eve had got parts in various summer-theatre productions.

That was ridiculous. Eve's car was nine years old and in no condition to make a long trip. And it was Sophie Ian had got lonesome for—you could tell that by her warm, averted face.

"Well, that's wonderful," Eve said. "That he's got along so well with his book."

"It is," said Sophie. She always had an air of careful detachment when she spoke of Ian's book, and when Eve asked what it was about she had merely said, "Urban geography." Perhaps this was the correct behavior for academic wives—Eve had never known any.



She was driving so slowly that it was possible—easy—for a figure to rise up out of the tall weeds and jump in.

DENNY MOERS' "PRAIRIE DWELLING 1," COURTESY ROBERT KLEIN GALLERY, BOSTON

"Anyway, you'll get some time by yourself," Sophie said. "After all this circus."

Maybe they'd had a tiff, thought Eve. This whole visit might have been tactical. Sophie might have taken the children off just to show him something. Planning holidays without him, to prove to herself that she could do it.

And the burning question was: Who did the phoning?

"Why don't you leave the children here?" she said. "Just while you drive to the airport? Then drive back and pick them up and take off. That way, you'd have a little time alone, and a little time alone with Ian. It'll be hell with them at the airport."

"I'm tempted," Sophie said.

So in the end that was what she did. Now Eve had to wonder if she herself had planned that change so that she could question Philip, which she must not do.

("Wasn't it a big surprise when your dad phoned from California?"

"He didn't phone. My mom phoned him."

"Did she? Oh, I didn't know. What did she say?"

"She said, 'I can't stand it here, I'm sick of it, let's figure out some plan to get me away.' ")

WHEN Sophie had called from California to say that she and Ian were getting married, Eve had asked her if it wouldn't be smarter just to live together first.

She had not thought Ian was any sort of contender—not so serious, even, as the Irish boy who had passed through a couple of years before, leaving Sophie pregnant with Philip, who initially looked a lot like Samuel Beckett.

"Oh, no," Sophie said. "Ian's weird, he doesn't believe in that."

And from then until now it had not been feasible for Eve to get to California. Invitations to visit had not been all that urgent, or even specific. Sophie had walked out of Eve's household a girl student with a toddling son—a winter-pale girl, harassed but high-spirited—and come back a self-contained full-bodied married woman with two children, a creamed-coffee skin and lilac crescents of a permanent mild fatigue beneath her eyes. Also with a certain aversion to memories of the life she'd shared with Eve, of her blithe childhood (as Eve recalled it) or her adventurous days as a young mother. During this visit they had maintained a pleasant puttering routine of morning chores, beach afternoons, wine and movies

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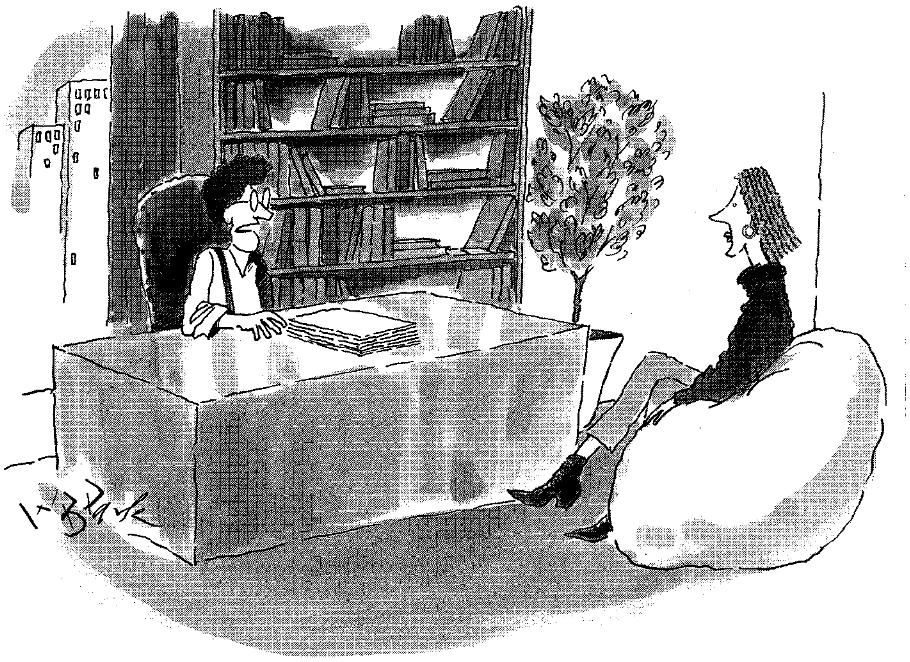
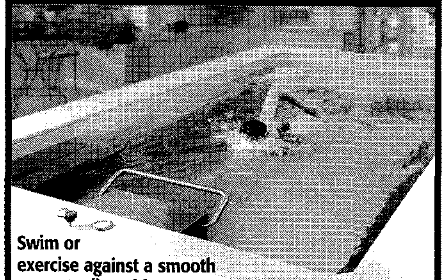
when the children were in bed. And had avoided what seemed to be some mysterious disagreement or irreparable change of heart.

WHEN Eve was a child staying in the village with her brother and her parents, they didn't have a car—it was wartime, they had come here on the train. The woman who ran the hotel was friends with Eve's mother, and they would be invited along when she drove to the country to buy corn or raspberries or tomatoes. Sometimes they would stop to have tea and look at the old dishes and bits of furniture for sale in some enterprising farm woman's front parlor. Eve's father preferred to stay behind and play checkers with some of the other men on the beach, while her brother watched them or went swimming unsupervised—he was older. The old hotel with its verandas extending over the sand was gone now, and the railway station with its flower beds spelling out the name of the village. The railway tracks, too. Instead, there was a fake old-fashioned mall with the satisfactory new supermarket and boutiques for leisure wear and country crafts.

When Eve was quite small and wore a great hair bow on top of her head, she was fond of these country expeditions. She ate tiny jam tarts and cakes whose frosting was stiff on top and soft underneath, topped with a bleeding maraschino cherry. She was not allowed to touch the dishes or the lace-and-satin pincushions or the sallow-looking old dolls, and the women's conversations passed over her head with a temporary and mildly depressing effect, like the inevitable clouds. But she enjoyed riding in the back seat, imagining herself on horseback or in a royal coach. Later on she refused to go. She began to hate trailing along with her mother and being identified as her mother's daughter. My daughter Eva. How richly condescending, and mistakenly possessive, that voice sounded in her ears. (She herself would use it, or some version of it, for years as a staple in some of her broadest, least accomplished acting.) She also detested her mother's habit of wearing large hats and gloves in the country, and sheer dresses on which there were raised flowers, like scabs. The oxford shoes, on the other hand—worn to favor her mother's corns—appeared embarrassingly stout and shabby. "What did you hate most about your mother?" was a game that Eve would play with her friends in her first years free of home. "Corsets," one girl would say, and another said, "Wet aprons." Hairnets. Fat arms. Bible quotations. The way she sang "Danny Boy," Eve always said. Her corns.



"This has merit, but could you go back through and add more 'like's and 'you know's?"



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She had forgotten all about this game until recently. The thought of it now was like touching a bad tooth.

Ahead of them the truck slowed and, without signalling, turned into a long tree-lined lane. Eve said, "I can't follow them any farther, Philip. That truck just belongs to some farmer who's headed home."

Philip said, "You're wrong. We have to." Eve drove on all the same, but as she passed the lane she noticed the gateposts. They were unusual, being shaped something like crude minarets and decorated with whitewashed pebbles and bits of colored glass. Neither one of them was straight, and they were half hidden by goldenrod and wild carrot, so that they had lost all reality as gateposts and looked, instead, like abandoned stage props from some gaudy operetta. The minute Eve saw them she remembered something else—a whitewashed outdoor wall in which pictures were set. The pictures were stiff, fantastic, childish scenes. Churches with spires, castles with towers, square houses with square, lopsided yellow windows. Triangular Christmas trees and tropical-colored birds half as big as the trees, a fat horse with dinky legs and burning red eyes, curly blue rivers of unvarying width, like lengths of ribbon, a moon and drunken stars and fat sunflowers nodding over the roofs of houses. All this made of pieces of colored glass set into cement, or plaster. She had seen it, and it wasn't in any public place. It was out in the country, and she was with her mother. The shape of her mother loomed in front of the wall—she was talking to an old farmer. He might only have been her mother's age, of course, and just looked old to Eve.

They went to look at odd things on those trips; they didn't just look at antiques. They had gone to see a shrub cut to resemble a bear, and an orchard of dwarf apple trees.

She didn't remember the gateposts at all, but it seemed to her that they could not have belonged to any other place. She backed the car up and swung around into the narrow track beneath the trees. The trees were heavy old Scotch pines, probably dangerous—you could see dangling dead and half-dead branches, and branches that had already blown or fallen down were lying

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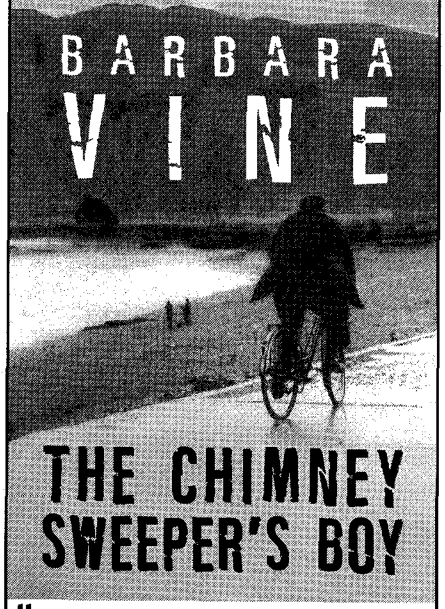

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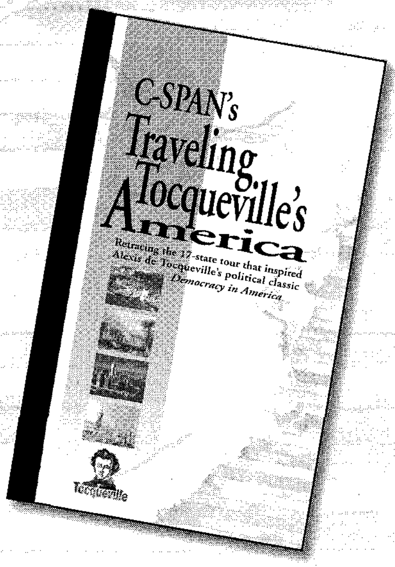
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in the grass and weeds on either side of the track. The car rocked back and forth in the ruts, and it seemed that Daisy approved of this motion. She began to make an accompanying noise: "Whoppy. Whoppy. Whoppy."

Here was something Daisy might remember—all she might remember—of this day. The arched trees, the sudden shadow, the interesting motion of the car. Maybe the white faces of the wild carrot that brushed at the windows. The sense of Philip beside her—his incomprehensible serious excitement, the tingling of his childish voice brought under unnatural control. A much vaguer sense of Eve—bare, freckly, sun-wrinkled arms, gray-blond frizzy curls held back by a black hair band. Maybe a smell. Not of cigarettes anymore, or of the touted creams and cosmetics on which Eve once spent so much of her money. Old skin? Garlic? Wine? Mouthwash? Eve might be dead when Daisy remembered this. Daisy and Philip might be estranged. Eve had not spoken to her own brother for three years. Not since he said to her on the phone, "You shouldn't have become an actress if you weren't equipped to make a better go of it."

THERE wasn't any sign of a house ahead, but through a gap in the trees the skeleton of a barn rose up, walls gone, beams intact, roof whole but flopping to one side like a funny hat. There seemed to be pieces of machinery, old cars, or trucks scattered around it, in the sea of flowering weeds. Eve didn't have much leisure to look—she was busy controlling the car on this rough track. The green truck had disappeared ahead of her—how far could it have gone? Then she saw that the lane curved. It curved, and they left the shade of the pines and were out in the sunlight. The same sea foam of wild carrot, the same impression of rusting junk strewn about, a high wild hedge to one side, and there was the house, finally, behind it. A big house, two stories of yellowish-gray brick, an attic story of wood, its dormer windows stuffed with dirty foam rubber. One of the lower windows shone with the tinfoil that covered it on the inside.

She had come to the wrong place.

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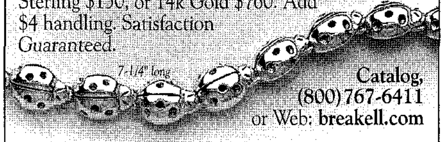

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She had no memory of this house. There was no wall here around mowed grass. Saplings grew up at random in the weeds.

The truck was parked ahead of her. And ahead of that she could see a patch of cleared ground where gravel had been spread and where she could have turned the car around. But she couldn't get past the truck to do that. She had to stop, too. She wondered if the man in the truck had stopped where he did on purpose, so that she would have to explain herself. He was now getting out of the truck in a leisurely way. Without looking at her, he released the dog, which had been running back and forth and barking with a great deal of angry spirit. Once on the ground, it continued to bark but didn't leave the man's side. The man wore a cap that shaded his face, so that Eve could not see his expression. He stood by the truck looking at them, not yet deciding to come any closer.

Eve unbuckled her seat belt.

"Don't get out," Philip said in a shrill voice. "Stay in the car. Turn around. Drive away."

"I can't," said Eve. "It's all right. That dog's just a yapper—he won't hurt me."

"Don't get out."

She should never have let the game get so far out of control. Philip was too excitable. "This isn't part of the game," she said. "He's just a man."

"I know," said Philip. "But don't get out."

"Stop that," said Eve, and got out and shut the door.

"Hi," she said. "I'm sorry. I made a mistake. I thought this was somewhere else."

The man said something like "Hey."

"I was actually looking for another place," Eve said. "It was a place I came to once when I was a little girl. There was a wall with pictures on it all made with pieces of broken glass. A cement wall, I think, whitewashed. When I saw those pillars by the road, I thought this must be it. You must have thought we were following you. It sounds so silly."

She heard the car door open. Philip got out, dragging Daisy behind him. Eve thought he had come to be close to her, and she put out her arm to welcome him. But he detached himself from Daisy and circled round Eve and spoke to the man. He had been almost hysterical a moment before, but now he said in a challenging way, "Is your dog friendly?"

"She won't hurt you," the man said. "Long as I'm here, she's O.K. She gets in a tear because she's really a pup. She's still a pup."

He was a small man, no taller than Eve. He was wearing jeans and one of those open vests of colorful weave, made in Peru or Guatemala. Gold chains and medallions sparkled on his hairless, tanned, and muscular chest. When he spoke, he threw his head back and Eve could see that his face was older than his body. Some front teeth were missing.

"We won't bother you anymore," she said. "Philip, I was just telling this man we drove down this road looking for a place I came to when I was a little girl, and there were pictures made of colored glass set in a wall. But I made a mistake, this isn't the place."

"What's her name?" said Philip.

"Trixie," the man said, and on hearing her name the dog jumped up and bumped his arm. He swatted her down. "I don't know about no pictures. I don't live here. Harold, he's the one would know."

"It's all right," said Eve, and hoisted Daisy up on her hip. "If you could just move the truck ahead, then I could turn around."

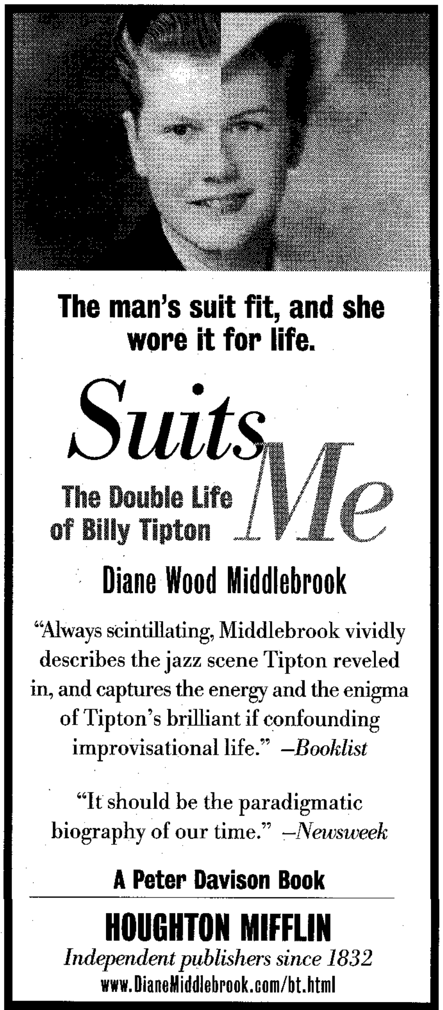
"I don't know no pictures. See, if they was in the front part of the house I never would've saw them because Harold, like, he's got the front part of the house shut off."

"No, they were outside," said Eve. "It doesn't matter. This was years and years ago."

"Yeah. Yeah. Yeah," the man said, warming to the conversation. "You come in and get Harold to tell you about it. You know Harold? He's who owns it here. Mary, she owns it like, but Harold he put her in the Home, so now he does. It wasn't his fault—she had to go there." He reached into the truck and took out two cases of beer. "I just had to go to town, Harold sent me into town. You go on. You go in. Harold be glad to see you."

"Here, Trixie," Philip said sternly. Eve didn't believe he even cared about dogs—he was just asserting himself.

The dog came yelping and bound-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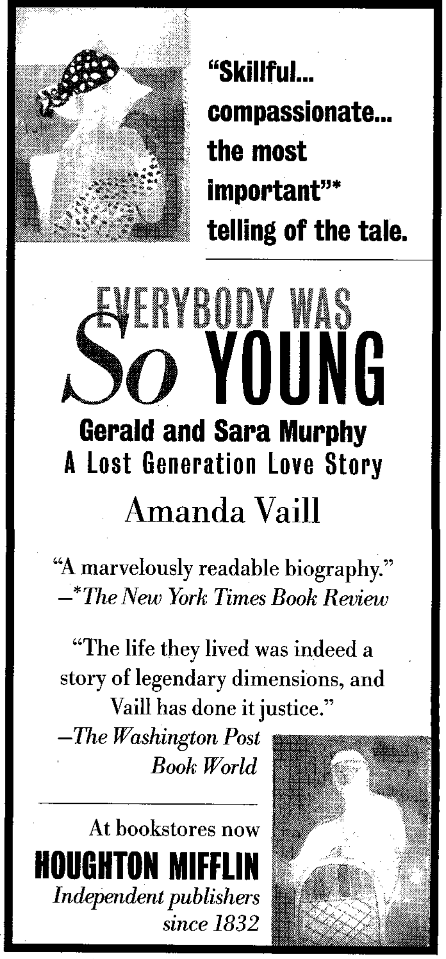
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sun blanches the pebbled walks;
dusty pigeons nuzzle in the sycamores.

The trees have lost half their lives
to the need for order, and make now
a neat avenue of shade
where couples with children walk

by an old lady feeding the birds
and murmuring their language.
A jay cries defiance from the shades
behind iron railings, and you might

for the moment be floating above
your own body, looking down
in late-afternoon leaf-filtered light
on this Etruscan couple crowning

their urn: she's raised her arm to
point to the way they bud and blossom
and blow their lives away, the roses,
in a fine riot of color, while he

has fixed his gaze on the strictly
tethered fuchsia hedges, staked
at certain intervals along the borders.
Above, two pigeons are kissing,

necks wound round each other
like a capital letter in "The Art of Love,"
lidded eyes drowsy, indifferent,
collars shining in the green shade.

And caught in mid-stride, catching
both their eyes, a tall woman passes
in sunflower and crimson: her bag of blue
Italian leather jerks like a live thing.

—EAMON GRENNAN

ing around them. Daisy squealed with fright and pleasure—she was the one who was more of an animal lover—and somehow they were all en route to the house, Eve carrying Daisy and Philip and Trixie scrambling around her up some earthen bumps that had once been porch steps. The man came close behind them, smelling of the beer that he must have been drinking in the truck.

"Open it up, go ahead in," he said. "Make your way through. You don't mind it's got a little untidy here? Mary's in the Home, nobody to keep it organized like it used to be."

Massive disorder was what they had to make their way through—the kind that takes years to accumulate. The bottom layer of it made up of chairs and tables and couches and perhaps a stove or two, with old bedclothes and newspapers and window shades and dead potted plants and ends of lumber and empty bottles and broken lighting fixtures and curtain rods piled on top of that, up to the ceiling in some places, blocking nearly all the light from outside. To make up for that, a light was burning by the inside door.

The man shifted the beer and got that door open, and shouted for Harold. It was hard to tell what sort of room they were in now—there were kitchen cupboards with the doors open, some cans on the shelves, but there were also a couple of cots with bare mattresses and rumpled blankets. The windows were so successfully covered up with furniture or hanging quilts that you couldn't tell where they were, and the smell was that of a junk store, a plugged sink, or maybe a plugged toilet, of cooking and grease and cigarettes and human sweat and dog mess and unremoved garbage.

Nobody answered the shouts. Eve turned around—there was room to turn around here, as there hadn't been on the porch—and said, "I don't think we should." But Trixie got in her way and the man ducked round her to bang on another door.

"Here he is," he said, still at the top of his voice, though he had opened the door. "Here's Harold, in here." At the same time, Trixie rushed forward and another man's voice said, "Fuck. Get that dog out of here."

"Lady here wants to see some pictures," the little man said. Trixie whined in pain—somebody had kicked her. Eve had no choice but to go on into the room.

This was a dining room. There was a heavy old dining-room table and substantial chairs. Three men were sitting, playing cards. The fourth man had got up to kick the dog. The temperature in the room was about ninety degrees.

"Shut the door, there's a draft," one of the men at the table said.

The little man hauled Trixie out from under the table and threw her into the outer room, then closed the door behind Eve and the children.

"Christ. Fuck," said the man who had got up. His chest and arms were so heavily tattooed that he seemed to have purple or bluish skin. He shook one foot as if it hurt. Perhaps he had also kicked a table leg when he kicked Trixie.

Sitting with his back to the door was a young man with sharp shoulders and a delicate neck. At least Eve assumed he was young, because he wore

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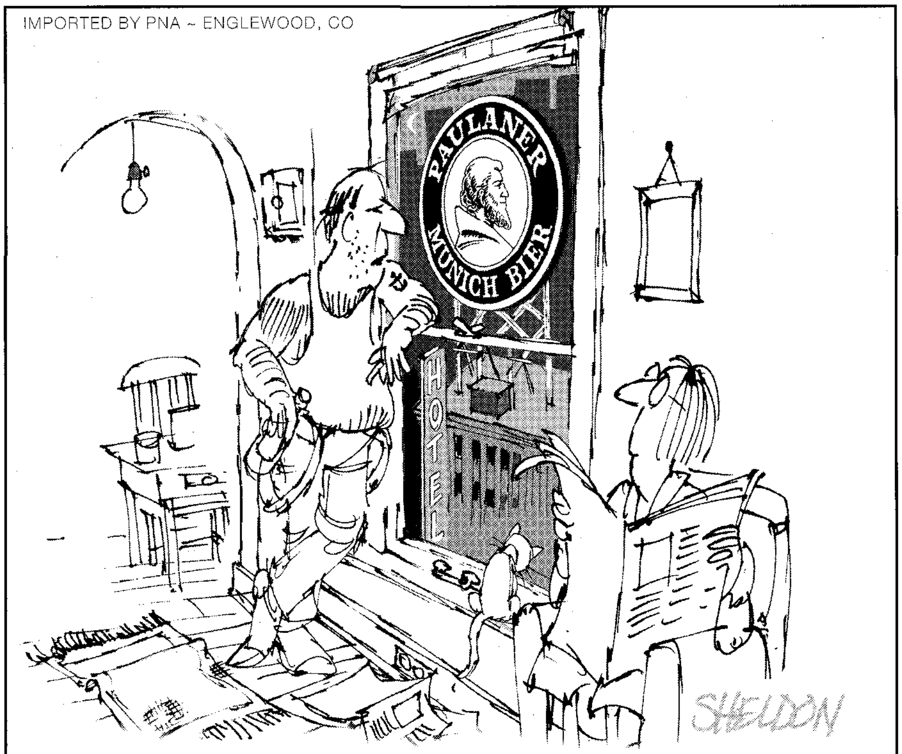

"I say they ain't so fancy, they mispelt beer."

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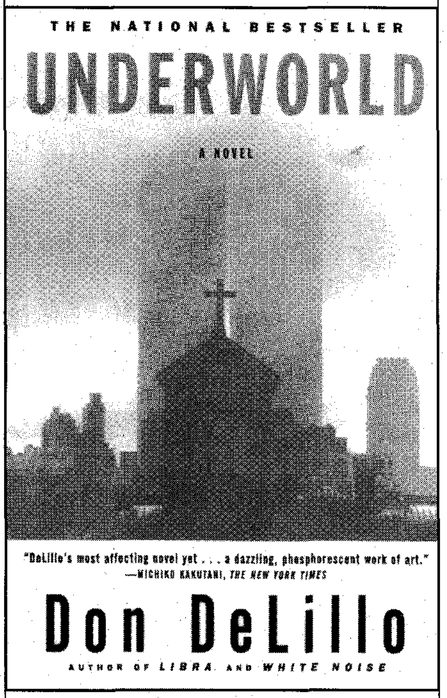
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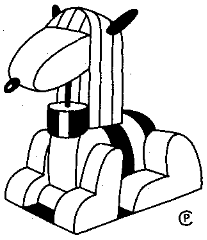
his hair in dyed golden spikes and had gold rings in his ears. He didn't turn around. The man across from him was as old as Eve herself, and had a shaved head, a tidy gray beard, and bloodshot blue eyes. He looked at Eve without any friendliness, but with some intelligence or comprehension, and in this he was unlike the tattooed man, who had looked at her as if she were some kind of hallucination that he had decided to ignore.



At the end of the table, in the host's or the father's chair, sat the man who had given the order to close the door, but who hadn't looked up or otherwise paid any attention to the interruption. He was a large-boned, fat, pale man with sweaty brown curls, and, as far as Eve could tell, he was entirely naked. The tattooed man and the blond man were wearing jeans, and the gray-bearded man was wearing jeans and a checked shirt buttoned up to the neck and a string tie. There were glasses and bottles on the table. The man in the host's chair—he must be Harold—and the gray-bearded man were drinking whiskey. The other two were drinking beer.

"I told her maybe there was pictures in the front, but she couldn't go in there, you got that shut up," the little man said.

Harold said, "You shut up."

Eve said, "I'm really sorry." There seemed to be nothing to do but go into her spiel, enlarging it to include staying at the village hotel as a little girl, drives with her mother, the pictures in the wall, her memory of them today, the gateposts, her obvious mistake, her apologies. She spoke directly to the graybeard, since he seemed to be the only one willing to listen or capable of understanding her. Her arm and shoulder ached from the weight of Daisy and from the tension that had got hold of her entire body. Yet she was thinking how she would describe this—she'd say it was like finding yourself in the middle of a Pinter play. Or like all her nightmares of a stolid, silent, hostile audience.

The graybeard spoke when she could not think of any further charming or apologetic thing to say. He said, "I don't know. You'll have to ask Harold. Hey. Hey, Harold. Do you know anything about some pictures made out of broken glass?"

"Tell her when she was riding around looking at pictures I wasn't even born yet," said Harold, without looking up.

"You're out of luck, lady," said the graybeard.

The tattooed man whistled. "Hey you," he said to Philip. "Hey, kid. Can you play the piano?"

There was a piano behind Harold's chair. There was no stool or bench—Harold himself taking up most of the room between the piano and the table—and inappropriate things, such as plates and overcoats, were piled on top of it, as they were on every surface in the house.

"No," said Eve quickly. "No, he can't."

"I'm asking him," the tattooed man said. "Can you play a tune?"

"Let him alone," the graybeard said.

"Just asking if he can play a tune, what's the matter with that?"

"Let him alone."

"You see, I can't move until somebody moves the truck," Eve said.

She thought, There is a smell of semen in this room.

"If you could just move—" she said, turning and expecting to find the little man behind her. She stopped when she saw he wasn't there, he wasn't in the room at all, he had got out without her knowing when. What if he had locked the door?

She put her hand on the knob and it turned. The door opened with a little difficulty and a scramble on the other side. The little man had been crouched right there, listening. She went out without speaking to him, out through the kitchen, Philip trotting along beside her like the meekest little boy in the world. Along the narrow pathway in the porch, through the junk, and when they reached the open air she sucked it in, not having taken a real breath for a long time.

"You ought to go along down the road, ask down at Harold's cousin's place," the little man's voice came after her. "They got a nice place. They got a new house, she keeps it beautiful. They'll show you pictures or anything you want, they'll make you welcome. They'll sit you down and feed you, they don't let nobody go away empty."

He couldn't have been crouched against the door all the time, because

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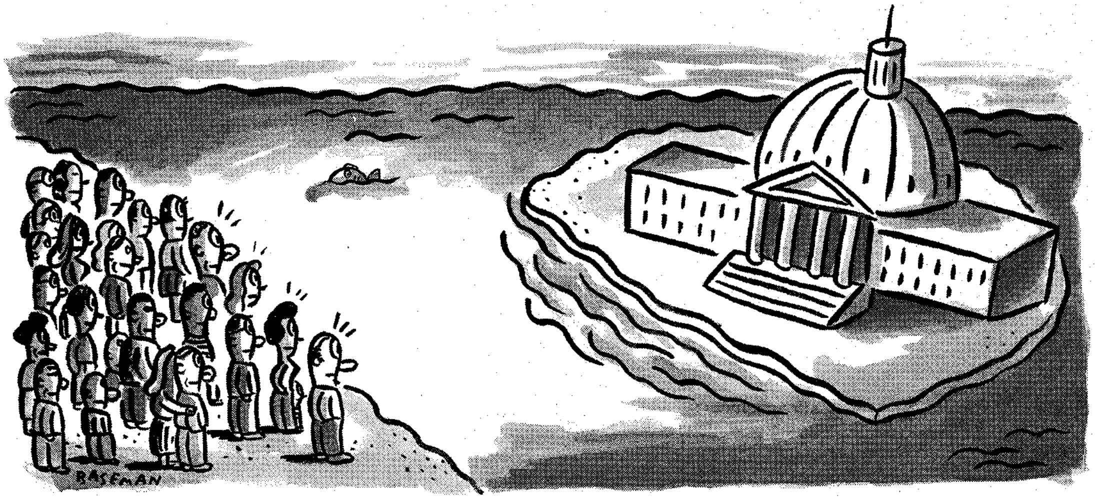

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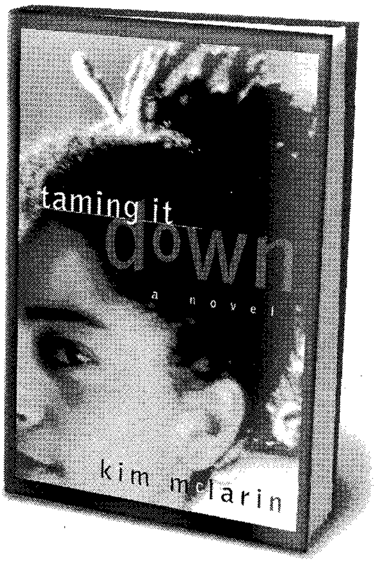

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he had moved the truck. Or somebody had. It had disappeared altogether, been driven away to some shed or parking spot out of sight.

"Thanks for telling me," Eve said. She got Daisy buckled in. Philip was buckling himself in, without having to be reminded. Trixie appeared from somewhere and walked around the car in a disconsolate way, sniffing at the tires.

Eve got in and closed the door, put her sweating hand on the key. The car started, she pulled ahead, onto the gravel—a space that was surrounded by thick bushes, berry bushes, she supposed, and old lilacs, as well as weeds. In places, these bushes had been flattened by piles of old tires and bottles and tin cans. It was hard to believe that things had been thrown out of that house, considering all that was left in it, but apparently they had. And as Eve swung the car around she saw, revealed by this flattening, some fragment of a wall, to which bits of whitewash still clung. She thought she could see pieces of glass embedded there, glinting.

She didn't slow down to look. She hoped Philip hadn't noticed. She got the car pointed toward the lane and drove past the dirt steps leading to the porch. The little man stood there waving with both arms, and Trixie was wagging her tail, sufficiently roused from her scared docility to bark farewell and chase them partway down the lane. The chase was only a formality, she could have caught up with them if she'd wanted to. Eve had to slow down at once when she hit the ruts.

She was driving so slowly that it was possible—easy—for a figure to rise up out of the tall weeds on the passenger side of the car and open the door, which Eve had not thought of locking, and jump in.

It was the blond boy who had been sitting at the table, the one whose face she had never seen.

"Don't be scared. Don't be scared, anybody. I just wondered if I could hitch a ride with you guys, O.K.?"

It wasn't a man or a boy. It was a young girl. A girl now wearing a dirty sort of undershirt.

"O.K.," Eve said. She had just managed to hold the car in the track.

"I couldn't ask you back in the house," the girl said. "I went in the bathroom and

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got out the window and run out here. They probably don't even know I'm gone yet. They're boiled." She grabbed a handful of the undershirt, which was much too large for her, and sniffed at it. "Stinks," she said. "I just grabbed this of Harold's was in the bathroom. Stinks."

Eve left the ruts, the darkness of the lane, and turned onto the ordinary road. "Jesus, I'm glad to get out of there," the girl said. "I didn't know nothing about what I was getting into. I didn't know even how I got there. It was night. It wasn't no place for me. You know what I mean?"

"They seemed pretty drunk, all right," Eve said.

"Yeah. Well, I'm sorry if I scared you."

"That's O.K."

"If I hadn't've jumped in I thought you wouldn't stop for me. Would you?"

"I don't know," said Eve. "I guess I would have if it got through to me you were a girl. I didn't really get a look at you before."

"Yeah, I don't look like much now. I look like shit now. I'm not saying I don't like to party. I like to party. But there's party and there's party, you know what I mean?"

She turned in the seat and looked at Eve so steadily that Eve had to take her eyes off the road for a moment and look back. And what she saw was that this girl was much more drunk than she sounded. Her dark-brown eyes were glazed but wide open, rounded with effort, and they had the imploring yet distant expression that drunks' eyes get—a kind of last-ditch insistence on fooling you. Her skin was blotched in some places and ashy in others, her whole face crumpled with the effects of a mighty binge. She was a natural brunette—the gold spikes were intentionally and provocatively dark at the roots—and pretty enough, if you disregarded her present dinginess, to make you wonder how she had ever got mixed up with Harold and his crew. Her shoulders were broad for a girl and her chest lean—her way of living and the style of the times must have taken ten or fifteen pounds off her—but she wasn't tall, and she really wasn't boyish. Her true inclination was to be a cuddly chunky girl, a darling dumpling.

"Herb was crazy bringing you in there like that," she said. "He's got a screw loose, Herb."

Eve said, "I gathered that."

"I don't know what he does around

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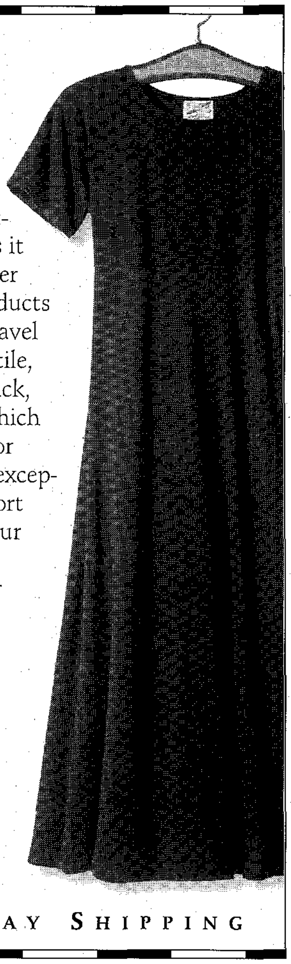

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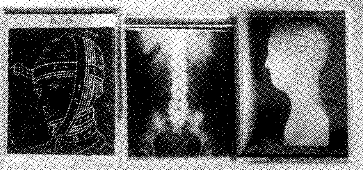

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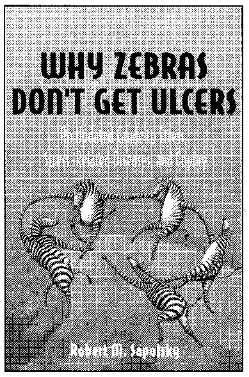

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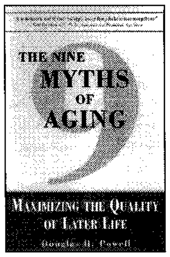

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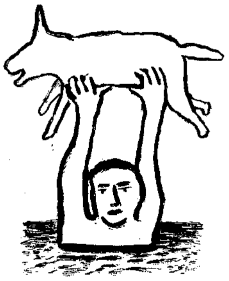
there, I guess he works for Harold. I don't think Harold uses him too good, neither."

Eve had never believed herself to be attracted to women in a sexual way, and her idea of attractiveness in another woman had never been this soiled and wayward charm. But perhaps the girl did not believe this possible—she must be so used to appealing to people. At any rate, she slid her hand along Eve's bare thigh, just getting a little way beyond the hem of her shorts. It was a practiced move, drunk as she was. To spread the fingers, to grasp flesh on the first try, would have been too much. A practiced, automatically hopeful move, yet so lacking in any true, strong, squirmy, comradely lust that Eve felt the hand might just as easily have fallen short and caressed the car upholstery instead.

"I'm O.K.," the girl said, and her voice, like the hand, struggled to put herself and Eve on a new level of intimacy. "You know what I mean? You understand me. O.K.?"

"Of course," Eve said brightly, and the hand trailed away, its whore's courtesy finished. But it had not failed altogether. Blatant and halfhearted as it was, it had been enough to set some old wires twitching. And the fact that it could be effective in any way filled Eve with misgiving, flung a shadow from this moment over all the rowdy and impulsive, as well as all the hopeful and serious, the more or less unrepented-of, couplings of her life. Not a real flareup of shame, a sense of sin—just a shadow. What a joke on her, if she started to hanker now after a purer past and a cleaner slate.



No. It was possible that she just hankered after love.

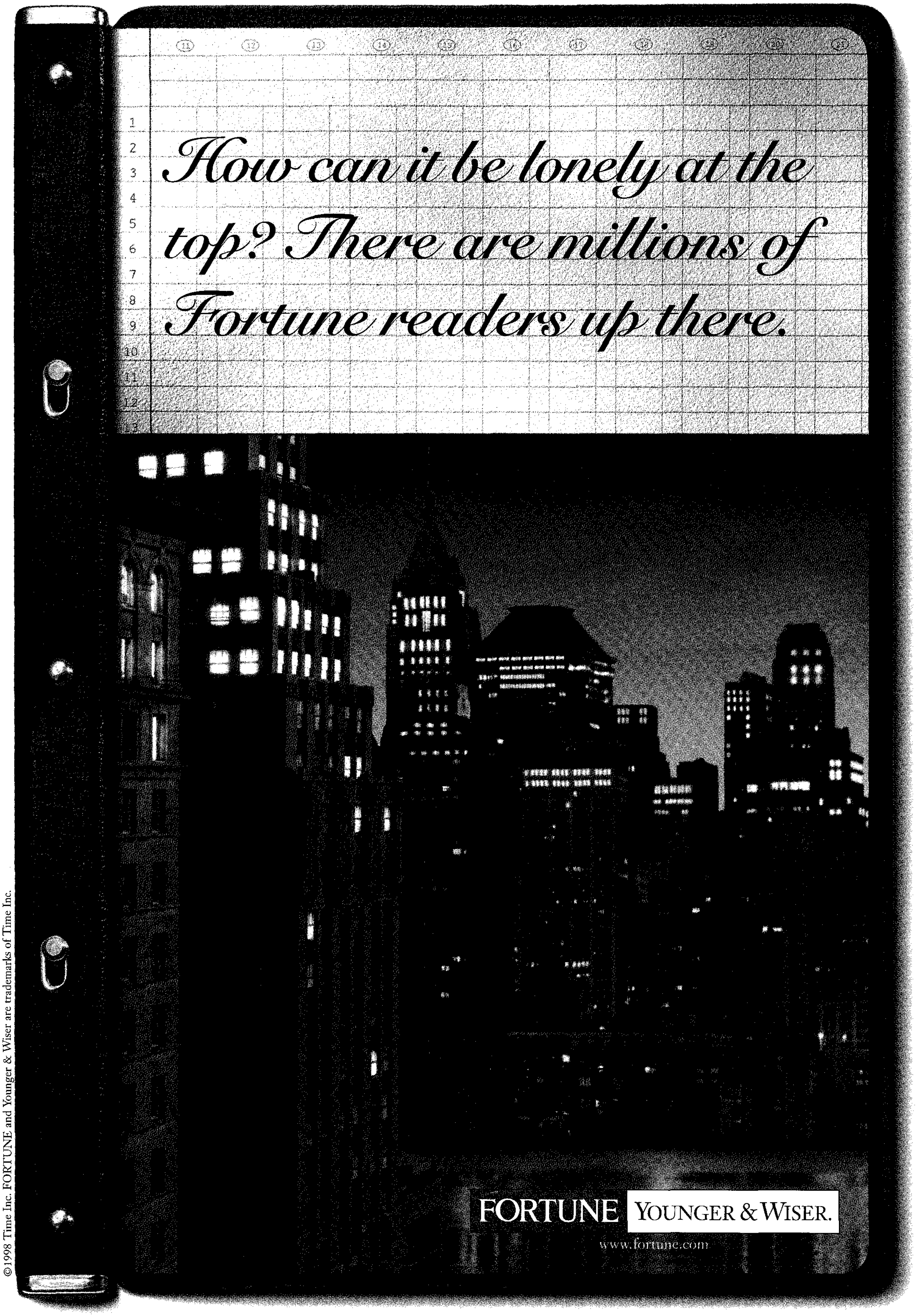
SOPHIE'S father was from Kerala, in the south of India. Eve had met him, and spent her whole time with him, on a train going from Vancouver to Toronto. He was a young doctor studying in Canada on a fellowship. He had a wife already, and a baby daughter, at home in India.

The train trip took three days. There was a half-hour stop in Calgary. Eve and the doctor ran around looking for a drugstore where they could buy condoms. They didn't find one. By the time they got to Winnipeg, where the train stopped for a full hour, it was too late. In fact, Eve always said, when she told their story, by the time they left the Calgary city limits it was probably too late.

He was travelling in the day coach—his school fellowship was not generous. But Eve had splurged and got herself a roomette. It was this extravagance—a last-minute decision—it was the convenience and privacy of the roomette that was responsible, Eve said, for the existence of Sophie and the greatest change in her, Eve's, life. That, and the fact that you couldn't get condoms anywhere around the Calgary station, not for love or money.

In Toronto, she waved goodbye to her lover from Kerala, as you would wave to any train acquaintance, because she was met there by the man who was at that time the serious interest and the main trouble in her life. The whole three days had been underscored by the swaying and rocking of the train—their motions were never just what they contrived themselves, and perhaps for that reason seemed guiltless, irresistible. Their feelings and conversations must have been affected, too. Eve remembered these as sweet and generous, never solemn or desperate.

She told Sophie his Christian name—Thomas, after the saint. Until she met him, Eve had never heard about the ancient Christians in southern India. For a while, when she was in her teens, Sophie had taken an interest in Kerala. She brought home books from the library and took to going to parties in a sari. She talked about looking her father up when she got older. The fact that she knew his first name and his special study—diseases of the blood—seemed to her possibly enough. Eve stressed to her the size of the population of India and the chance that he had not even stayed there. What she could not bring herself to explain was how incidental, how nearly unimaginable, the existence of Sophie would be, necessarily, in her father's life. Fortunately, the idea faded, and Sophie gave up wearing the sari when all those dramatic, ethnic costumes became too commonplace. The only time she mentioned her father, later on, was when she was carrying Philip,



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and making jokes about keeping up the family tradition of fly-by fathers.

EVE said to the girl, "Where is it you want to go?"

The girl jerked backward, facing the road. "Where you going?" she said. "You live around here?" The blurred, tired tones of seduction had changed, as no doubt they would after sex, into a tone of exhausted contempt and vague threat or challenge.

"There's a bus goes through the village," Eve said. "It stops at the gas station. I've seen the sign."

"Yeah, but just one thing," the girl said. "I got no money. See, I got away from there in such a hurry I never got to collect my money. So what use would it be me getting on a bus without no money?"

The thing to do was not to recognize a threat. Tell her that she could hitchhike if she had no money. It wasn't likely that she had a gun in her jeans. She just wanted to sound as if she might have one.

But a knife?

The girl turned for the first time to look into the back seat.

"You kids O.K. back there?" she said.

No answer.

"They're cute," she said. "They shy with strangers?"

How stupid to think about sex when the reality, the danger, was elsewhere.

Eve's purse was on the floor of the car in front of the girl's feet. She didn't know how much money was in it. Sixty, seventy dollars. Hardly more. If she offered money for a ticket the girl would name an expensive destination. Montreal. Or at least Toronto. If she said, "Just take what's there," the girl would see capitulation. She would sense Eve's fear and might try to push further. What was the best she could do? Steal the car? If she left Eve and the children beside the road the police would be after her in a hurry. If she left them dead in some thicket, she might get farther. Or if she took them along while she needed them, a knife against Eve's side or a child's throat.

Such things happen. But not as often as in the movies. Such things don't often happen.

Eve turned onto the county road, which was fairly busy. Why did that make her feel better? Safety there was an illusion. She could be driving along the highway in the midst of the day's traffic, taking herself and the children to their deaths.

The girl said, "Where's this road go?"

"It goes out to the main highway."

"Let's drive out there."

"That's where I'm driving," Eve said.

"Which way's the highway go?"

"It goes north to Owen Sound or up to Tobermory, where you get the boat. Or south to—I don't know. But it joins another highway that would get you to Sarnia. Or London. Or Detroit or Toronto if you keep going."

Nothing more was said until they reached the highway. Eve turned onto it and said, "This is it."

"Which way you heading now?"

Couldn't she tell by the sun?

"I'm heading north," Eve said.

"That the way you live, then?"

"I'm going to the village. I'm going to stop for gas."

"You got gas," the girl said. "You got over half a tank."

That was stupid. Eve should have said groceries.

Beside her the girl let out a long groan of decision, maybe of relinquishment.

"You know," she said. "You know, I might as well get out here if I'm going to hitch a ride. Get a ride here as easy as anyplace."

Eve pulled over onto the gravel. Relief was turning into something like shame. What was it like to be drunk, wasted, with no money, at the side of the road?

"Which way you said we're going?"

"North," Eve told her again.

"Which way you said to Sarnia?"

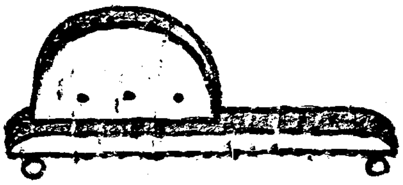
"South. Just cross the road, the car'll be headed south. Watch out for the traffic."

"Sure," the girl said. Her voice was already distant, she was calculating new chances. She was half out of the car as she said, "See you." And into the back seat, "See you guys. Be good."

"Wait," Eve said. She leaned over and felt in her purse for her wallet, and took out a twenty-dollar bill. She got out of the car and came round to where the girl was waiting. "Here," she said. "This'll help you."

"Yeah, thanks," the girl said, stuffing the bill in her pocket, her eyes on the road.

"Listen," said Eve. "If you're stranded I'll tell you where my house is. It's about two miles north of the village, and the village is about half a mile north of here. North. This way. It's all by itself in the middle of a field. It's got one ordinary window on one side of the front door and a funny-looking little window on the other. That's where they put in the bathroom."



"Yeah," the girl said.

"It's just that I thought, if you don't get a ride—"

"O.K.," the girl said. "Sure."

When they had started driving again, Philip said, "Yuck. She smelled like vomit."

A little farther on he said, "She didn't even know you should look at the sun to tell directions. She was stupid. Wasn't she?"

"I guess so," Eve said.

"Yuck. I never ever saw anybody so stupid."

As they went through the village, he asked if they could stop for ice-cream cones. Eve said no.

"There's so many people stopping for ice cream it's hard to find a place to park," she said. "We've got scads of ice cream at home."

"You shouldn't say 'home,'" said Philip. "It's just where we're staying. You should say 'the house.'"

The big hay rolls in a field to the east of the highway were facing ends on into the sun, so tightly packed they looked like shields or gongs or faces of Aztec metal. Past that was a field of pale soft gold. Barley.

"That's called barley, that gold stuff with the tails on it," she said to Philip.

"I know," he said.

"The tails are called beards sometimes." She began to recite, "But the reapers, reaping early, in among the bearded barley—"

Daisy said, "What does mean pearly?"

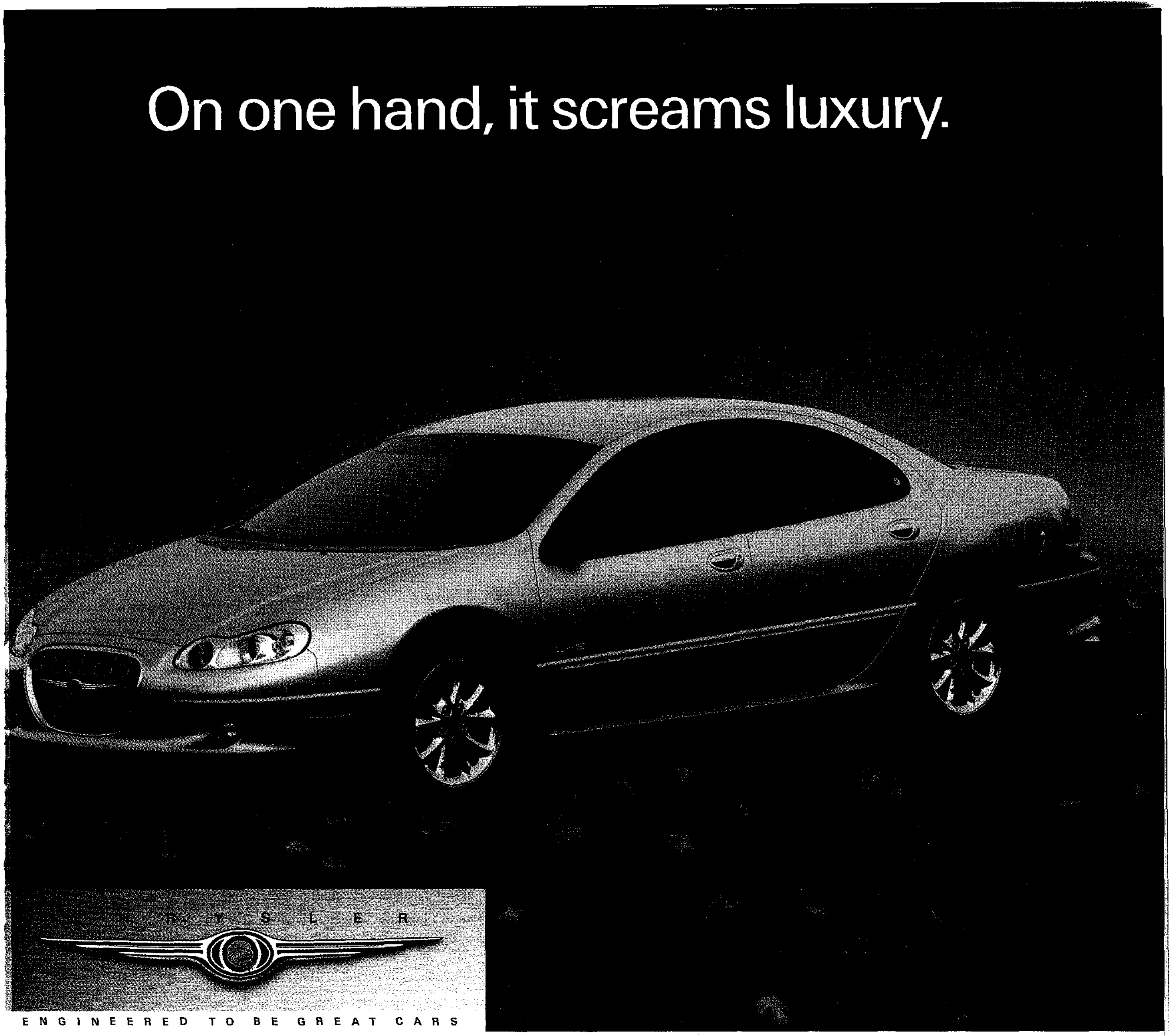
Philip said, "Bar-ley."

"Only reapers, reaping early," Eve said. She tried to remember. "Save the reapers, reaping early—"

That was the one she liked best. Save the reaper.

SOPHIE and Ian had bought corn at a roadside stand. It was for dinner. Plans had changed—they weren't leaving until morning. And they had bought a bottle of gin and some limes. Ian made the drinks while Eve and Sophie sat husking the corn.

"Two dozen. That's crazy," Eve said.



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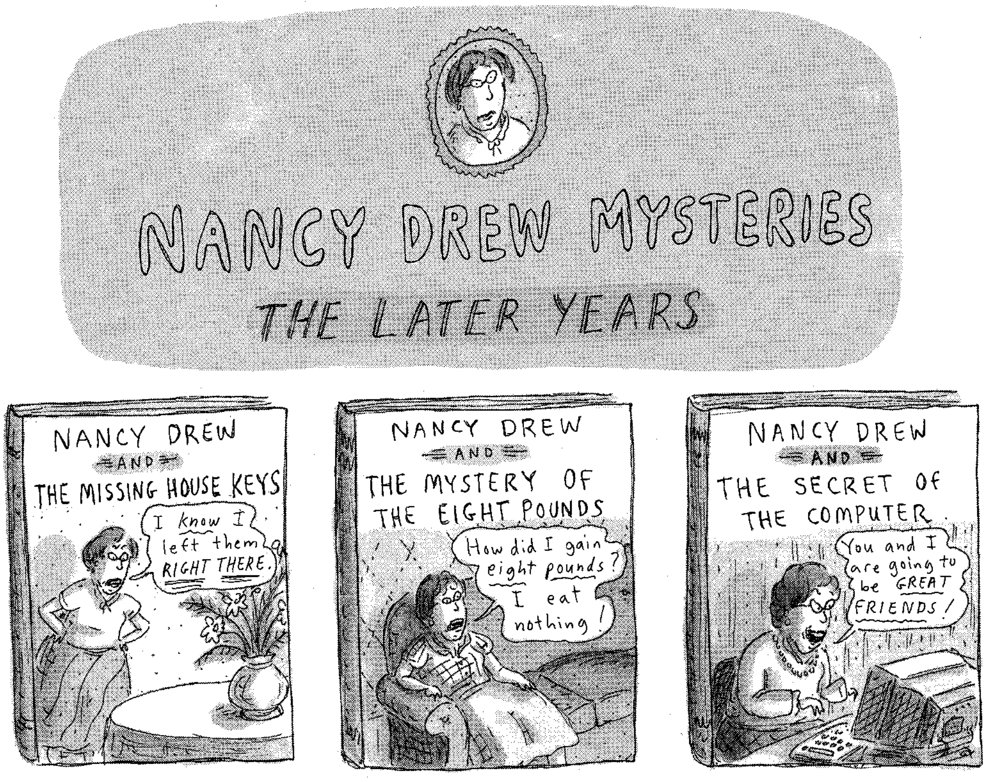
NANCY DREW MYSTERIES
THE LATER YEARS
NANCY DREW AND THE MISSING HOUSE KEYS
I know I left them RIGHT THERE.
NANCY DREW AND THE MYSTERY OF THE EIGHT POUNDS
How did I gain eight pounds? I eat nothing!
NANCY DREW AND THE SECRET OF THE COMPUTER
You and I are going to be GREAT FRIENDS!

"Wait and see," said Sophie. "Ian loves corn."

Ian bowed when he presented Eve with her drink, and after she had tasted it she said, "This is most heavenly."

Ian wasn't much as she had remembered or pictured him. He was not tall, Teutonic, humorless. He was a slim fair-haired man of medium height, quick-moving, companionable. Sophie was less assured, more eager in all she said and did, than she had seemed in the last two weeks. But happier, too.

Eve told her story. She began with the checkerboard on the beach, the vanished hotel, the drives into the country. It included her mother's city-lady outfits, her sheer dresses and matching slips, but not the older Eve's feelings of repugnance. And the things they went to see—the dwarf orchard, the shelf of old dolls, the marvellous pictures made of colored glass.

"They were a little like Chagall?" Eve said.

Ian said, "Yep, even us urban geographers know about Chagall."

"Sor-ry," Eve said. Both laughed.

Now the gateposts, the sudden memory, the dark lane and ruined barn and rusted machinery, the house a shambles.

"The owner was in there playing cards with his friends," Eve said. "He didn't know anything about it. Didn't know or didn't care. And, my God, it could have been sixty years ago, think of that."

Sophie said, "Oh, Mom. What a shame." She was glowing with relief to see Ian and Eve getting on so well together.

(She's not so awful, couldn't we stay one night?)

"Are you sure it was even the right place?" she said.

"Maybe not," said Eve. "Maybe not."

She would not mention the fragment of wall she had seen beyond the bushes. Why bother, when there were so many things she thought it best not to mention? First, the game that she had got Philip playing, overexciting him. And nearly everything about Harold and his companions. Everything, every single thing about the girl who had jumped into the car.

There are people who carry decency and optimism around with them, who seem to cleanse every atmosphere they settle in, and you can't tell such people things, it is too disruptive. Ian struck Eve as being one of those people, in spite of his present graciousness, and Sophie as being someone who thanked her lucky stars that she had found him. Eve could say that the house had smelled vile, and that the owner and his friends looked boozy and disreputable, but not that Harold was naked and never that she herself had been afraid. And never what she had been afraid of.

Philip was in charge of gathering up the cornhusks and carrying them outside to throw them along the edge of the field. Occasionally, Daisy picked up a few on her own, and took them off to be distributed around the house. Philip had added nothing to Eve's story and had not seemed to be concerned with the telling of it. But once it was told, and Ian (interested in bringing this local anecdote into line with his professional studies) was asking Eve what she knew about the breakup of older patterns of village and rural life, about the spread of what was called agribusiness, Philip did look up from the stooping and crawling he was doing around the adults' feet. He looked at Eve—a flat look, a moment of conspiratorial blankness, a buried smile, that passed before there could be any demand for recognition of it. It seemed to mean that, however much or little he knew, he knew about the importance of keeping things to yourself. Eve got a jolt from that. She wished to deny that she was in any way responsible for it, but she couldn't disclaim it.

If the girl came looking for her, they would all still be here. Then Eve's carefulness would go for nothing.

The girl wouldn't come. Much better offers would turn up before she'd stood ten minutes by the highway. More dangerous offers, perhaps, but more interesting, likely to be more profitable.

The girl wouldn't come. Unless she found some homeless, heartless wastrel her own age. (I know where there's a place we can stay, if we can get rid of the old lady.)

Not tonight but tomorrow night, Eve would lie down in this hollowed-out house, its board walls like a paper shell around her. She would will herself to grow light, free of consequence, and hope to go to sleep with nothing in her head but the deep, live rustle of the corn. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

IN THE CAPITAL OF WORDS

When Alfred Kazin came to the city and discovered America.

BY DAVID REMNICK

THE inexhaustible urge toward self-expression makes it nearly a sure thing that there will always be writers around as long as there is us. The dicier question is whether there will be readers. Not just readers of the sports pages and the jumble, of self-help best-sellers and the consultant's confessions, no, but passionate readers who ignore the phone and the TV for a few hours to engage a book whose "difficulty" is that it fails to soothe the ego or flatter a limited intelligence; the reader who honestly believes that the best and deepest of what we are is on the shelf, and that to read across the shelf changes the self, changes *you.* When Alfred Kazin died on June 5th, we lost a fine memoirist of New York intellectual life and an important historian of American literature; above all, we lost an exemplar of reading.

Unlike his close friend the historian Richard Hofstadter, who died with a stack of manuscript pages by his hospital bed, Kazin died having completed, more or less, what he had set out to do. There is a lucky roundness to his achievement. At the core of his work, Kazin finished what really amounted to two trilogies: a trilogy of memoirs—"A Walker in the City," "Starting Out in the Thirties," and "New York Jew"; and a trilogy of criticism—"On Native Grounds" (which was published in 1942 when he was just twenty-seven), "An American Procession," and "God and the American Writer" (which came out last year, when he was eighty-two and in the midst of a long battle with cancer). He read hungrily to the end. In recent months, he praised Isaac Bashevis Singer's posthumous novel, "Shadows on the Hudson," in *The New York Review of Books,* and demolished David Mamet's dilations on Judaism in "The Old Religion," in *The New Republic.*

Kazin's childhood in Brooklyn was typical of the group of men and women who would come to be known as the New York intellectuals: the working-class parents who, no matter when they left Europe, carried with them the guilt of the survivor and invested all their hopes in the education and success of their American children; the yearning to leave the outer boroughs for the "greater world" of Manhattan; the eroticized passion for books; the struggle to "overcome" the Judaism of Old World synagogue life and replace it with some other sense of Jewish identity. ("The Jews, the Jews, the Jews—the repetition of it even in my own mind sometimes drives me mad," Kazin wrote.)

Kazin's father was a painter, a union man, a worshipper of Eugene V. Debs. He read the *Jewish Daily Forward* and took his children to the *Forward* building as if to a shrine. Kazin's mother, the child of a Russian shtetl, spent her American youth at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory. With her legendary capacity for worry, toil, and self-denial, she was one more prototype of the immigrant mother: caring for, and agonizing over, a maiden aunt (who finally went mad in the Midwest); scrubbing the floor on hands and knees; eating supper, by herself, only after the husband and the children had been fed. Kazin saw in his parents an almost terrifying seriousness of purpose, a partnership arranged by others and without the fripperies of romance; their marriage was something simpler—determined, fierce, even patriotic. "I was perfectly sure that in my parents' minds *libbe* was something exotic and not wholly legitimate, reserved for 'educated' people like their children, who were the sole end of their existence," Kazin wrote in the mid-forties. "My father and mother worked in a rage to put us above their level; they had married to make *us* possible. We were the only conceivable end to their striving; we were their America."

At home, Kazin's parents spoke Yiddish, the doomed language of a doomed European Jewry, but their devotion to something utterly new—to American ambition—was absolute. "I worked on a hairline between triumph and catastrophe," Kazin wrote. "I was the first American child, their offering to the strange new God; I was to be the monument of their liberation from the shame of being—what they were."

Alfred Kazin's neighborhood was Brownsville, not as tough or as murderous as the Brownsville to follow—not Mike Tyson's Brownsville—but still a great distance from the *alrightniks* who lined up along middle-class Eastern Parkway, to say nothing of the shimmering vista of Manhattan. In "A Walker in the City," which was published first in this magazine and then in *Commentary* a half century ago, Kazin was nostalgic for the smells of his old grocery stores and kitchen, for the sense of community, but he also made clear that he wanted nothing less than to leave, to take the train west toward Manhattan, the "capital of words."

"We were the end of the line," he wrote. "We were the children of the immigrants who had camped at the city's back door, in New York's rawest, remotest, cheapest ghetto, enclosed on one side by the Canarsie flats and on the other by the hallowed middle-class districts that showed the way to New York. 'New York' was what we put last on our address, but first in thinking of the others around us. *They* were New York, the Gentiles, America; we were Brownsville—*Brunzvil,* as the old folks said—the dust of the earth to all Jews with money, and notoriously a place that measured all success by our skill in getting away from it."

In school, Kazin was tortured by a nasty stammer, but quickly became the sort of childhood reader who props up a book on his bureau while he's dressing, who reads through supper when he's allowed to, who takes a book and a flashlight to bed. "I read and read and read," he wrote in his journal, which was published as "A Lifetime Burning in Every Moment." "Everyone read a lot, even the tough guys on the block who always beat me in a fight." One neighborhood bully even taunted young Al-

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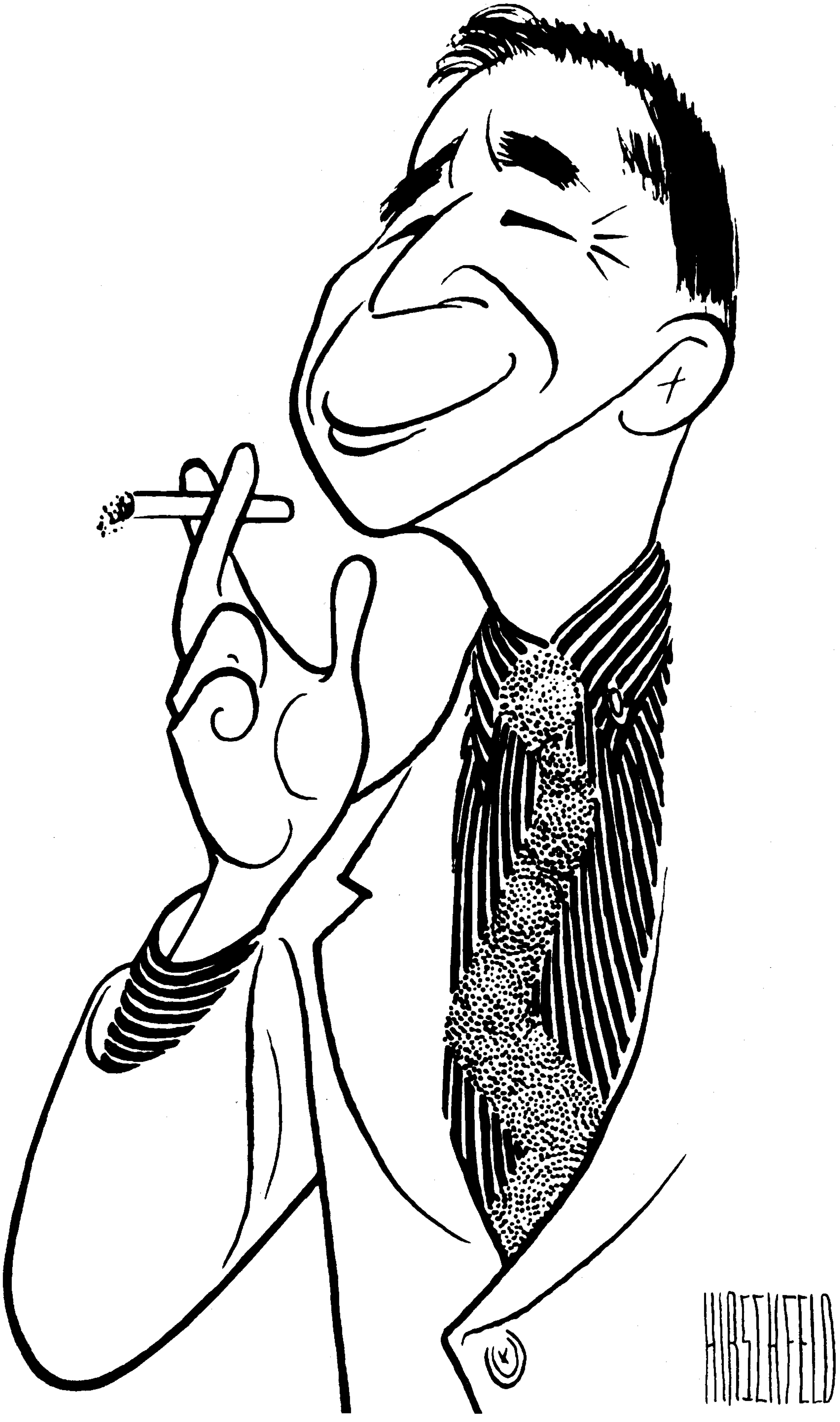
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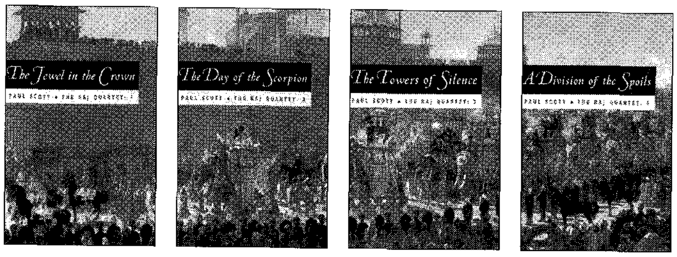

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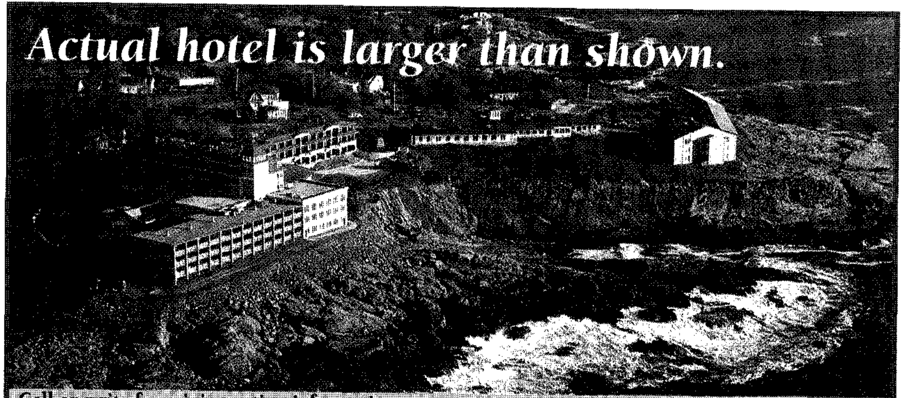

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fred with some literary one-upmanship:

"I'm reading a poet I bet you never heard of."

"Yeah, who?"

"His name is Ezra Pound."

So there.

IN the years to come, one of Kazin's models (along with Van Wyck Brooks) would be Edmund Wilson, whose books and essays were also intended for an educated audience of nonspecialists. But, unlike Kazin, Wilson came from a peculiar, unhappy, solidly upper-middle-class family, with its complete sets of Dickens and the Greek classics, and he moved easily into an aristocracy of bright young men at Princeton. His self-confidence as a reader, as a curator of literature, appears to have been almost as great in the classroom of Christian Gauss as it would be later, when he was *The New Yorker's* Great Explainer.

For Kazin, reading was a sentimental and intellectual education, as it was for Wilson, but it was also a way across the bridge. In his determination to make a mark, Kazin was unashamedly a cousin to David Levinsky and Duddy Kravitz. One afternoon, in 1934, when Kazin was nineteen and a student at City College, he was on the subway reading a particularly objectionable article in the *Times Book Review*. He simply got off at Times Square and, with fury in his heart, went to the *Times* newsroom and asked to see the author, John Chamberlain—the one critic at the paper whom the young radical intellectuals of the time respected. It was a gesture of terrific moxie, and Chamberlain shocked Kazin, talking with him about books for more than an hour and then, before sending him on his way, scribbling down a recommendation to his friends at *The New Republic* to give the boy a chance as a reviewer: "Here's an intelligent radical." (The culture was more accessible—more permeable—in those days. Suffice it to say that it is no longer quite so easy for undergraduates to cadge a free hour, much less a recommendation, from a busy columnist at the *Times*.)

Armed with his letter of introduction, Kazin eventually went to *The New Republic's* brownstone on West Twenty-first Street and began a career of reading books and reacting to them. His first literary editor was Malcolm Cowley. Over the decades, Kazin cobbled together a

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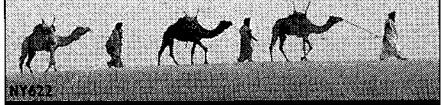
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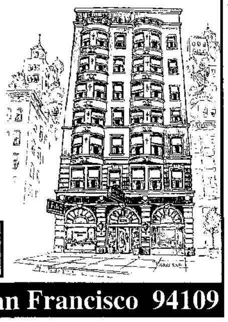

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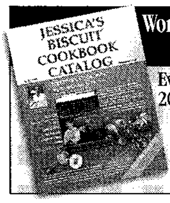

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freelance life—writing for every magazine imaginable, taking on teaching jobs without the imprimatur of a Ph.D.—that is all but impossible in contemporary New York. It was barely possible then.

KAZIN'S bravado—his incredible chutzpah—propelled him forward. At the age of twenty-three, he set out on a first-book project so ambitious and broad that it would be laughed out of today's academy. Kazin meant to provide a history of American literature, beginning with William Dean Howells, in the eighteen-eighties, as a way of understanding the era of protest and upheavals in which he was living. His was a time of unembarrassed and furious argument. The riot of left-wing sects that grew out of the Depression seem comic now, in a Gilded Age of self-satisfied politics, but the explosion of sects was the raw emotional response to a national breakdown. Kazin's politics were anti-Stalinist and left-wing. He took part in as many coffeehouse and editorial-meeting debates as anyone, but his true response to the times was the book that would become "On Native Grounds."

Unlike many of the student radicals of the sixties, Kazin approached his work with a sense of protest, but he was also "crazy about" America. Indeed, his very working conditions deepened his sense of Americanism, independence, and possibility. "For almost five years I had worked toward the book in the great open reading room, 315, of the New York Public Library, often in great all-day bouts of reading that began when the place opened at nine in the morning and ended only at ten at night," he wrote in "New York Jew." "With my friend Richard Hofstadter, who was writing 'Social Darwinism in American Thought' for his doctorate at Columbia, I would snap up my lunch in the Automat across the street from the Library, run up Fifth Avenue in the 'brownout' for exercise, find a pool parlor off Times Square for a hurried game of Ping-Pong, then return to the great yellow tables in 315, somehow always smelling of fresh varnish and piled with our books, on which we left little notes saying 'Back Soon, Do Not Disturb.' "

"My subject," Kazin continued, "had to do with the 'modern' as democracy; with America itself as the modern; with the end of the nineteenth century as the

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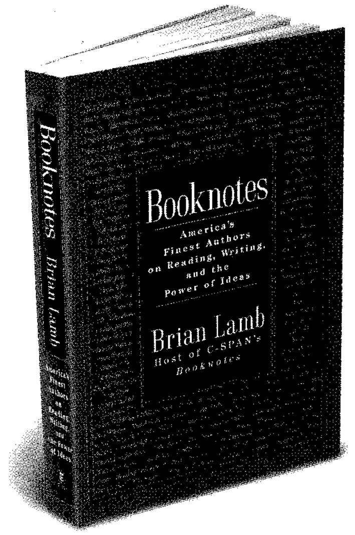
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America's Finest Authors on Reading, Writing, and the Power of Ideas
Brian Lamb
Host of C-SPAN's Booknotes

Which author was interviewed in the White House barber shop for a presidential staff position?
See page 240

Which acclaimed historian frequently writes in the nude?
See page 11

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Kazin admitted that he was seeking "fame and fortune" as he wrote "On Native Grounds," and when it was published he was rewarded, not least with a review in *The Nation*, by Lionel Trilling, who called "On Native Grounds" the "best and most complete treatment we have." In years to come, Trilling would disdain Kazin as too Jewish, a "schmo." Trilling was Columbia's token Jew in the English Department and was made anxious by Kazin's early memoirs, which tried to bring a Whitmanic passion to his memories of Brownsville: the scent of the pickle barrel was too much for the more mandarin critic.

"On Native Grounds" dared to be a big book that told an enormous story. Like F. O. Matthiessen in his "American Renaissance," D. S. Mirsky in his "History of Russian Literature," or Hofstadter in his "The American Political Tradition," Kazin had not hemmed himself in with narrow graduate-school goals. (Were he starting out and in the academy today, such a project would never get past a faculty adviser.) Most great literary surveys, such as E. R. Curtius's "European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages" or Erich Auerbach's "Mimesis," come in middle or late career, when the scholar has absorbed a library and marinated in his or her ideas, but for Kazin the field of American literature was wide open. There were no American-Studies Departments in the academy at the time, and the critical literature was fairly thin. The time was now.

Kazin was determined to write about books not as isolated objects but as if they were written by real men and women who lived in a particular time and place. He and others, like Wilson, Irving Howe, and Trilling, were reacting to that persistent mode of criticism which believes the study of a novel or a poem should resemble a pathologist's survey of tissue: under a bright light in a sterile white room. They were also reacting against

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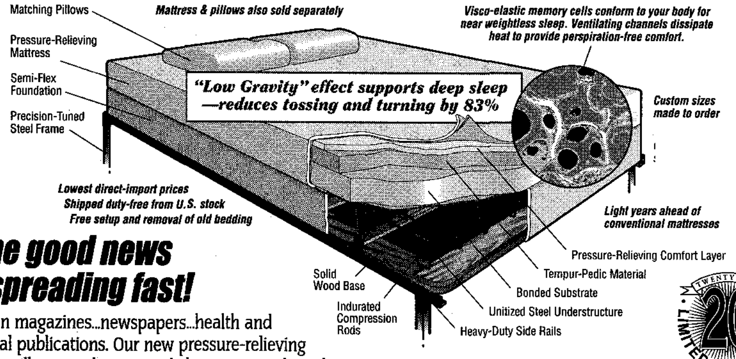
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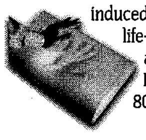

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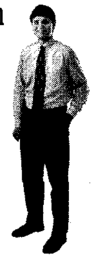

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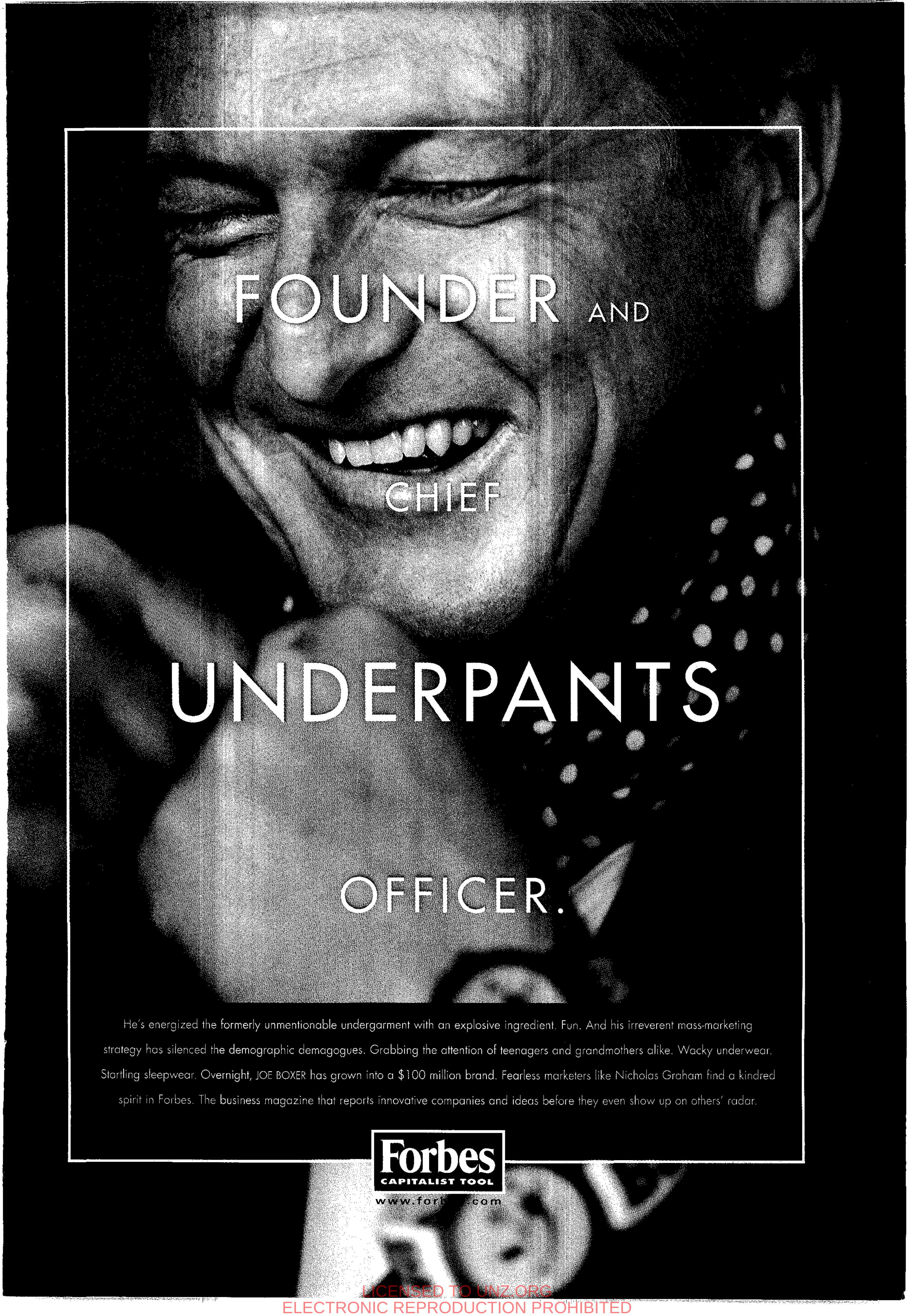

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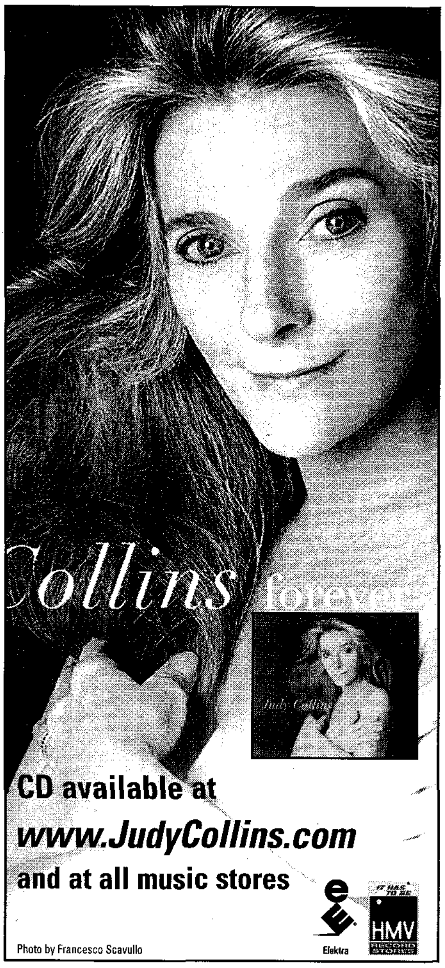

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criticism as a blunt instrument of political polemics. The balance struck in "On Native Grounds" is the balance struck, in fact, by the real reader, the nonspecialist, who reads for pleasure and enlightenment. And yet there is nothing middlebrow, nothing Mortimer Adlerish, about "On Native Grounds." Forty years before the rise of identity politics in the academy, Kazin's amazing début represented the best attempt by an outsider to make America his own through a national reading.

IN his memoirs Kazin wrote a more nakedly emotional narrative of becoming. He didn't mind exposing his pleasure in literary success and his proximity to the artists and thinkers of his day. His snapshot album is priceless: Isaac Rosenfeld sitting at home in his Reichian orgone box "as if he were waiting in his telephone booth for a call that was not coming through"; Edmund Wilson on the shore on Cape Cod wearing a white dress shirt because "I have only one way of dressing"; Hannah Arendt, the daughter of the German-Jewish upper middle classes and the student of Husserl and Heidegger, forced to take in a boarder to make the rent on Morningside Heights ("The boarder could be heard walking down the hall to the toilet. She rocked that dark flat with the flushing of the toilet; walked back to her room. Hannah paused ever so slightly in her explication of the police state"); Allen Tate on the beach at Wellfleet telling Kazin that, no, he didn't really care to look at Bernard Malamud's "The Assistant," because he wasn't especially interested in "books about Jews." Kazin replied by asking the imperious Tate whether this policy interferes with his reading of the New Testament.

In the sixties, when Kazin had the standing to be invited to a fund-raiser for Robert Kennedy at a vast apartment in the Dakota, he found himself afterward in the elevator with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and she asked him to take her home in a cab—she hadn't a dime on her. After "a vast silence in the cab," Mrs. Onassis said she hoped she wasn't keeping Kazin from anything important. In fact, Kazin was running late to give a lecture on "Huckleberry Finn" at the New School, downtown.

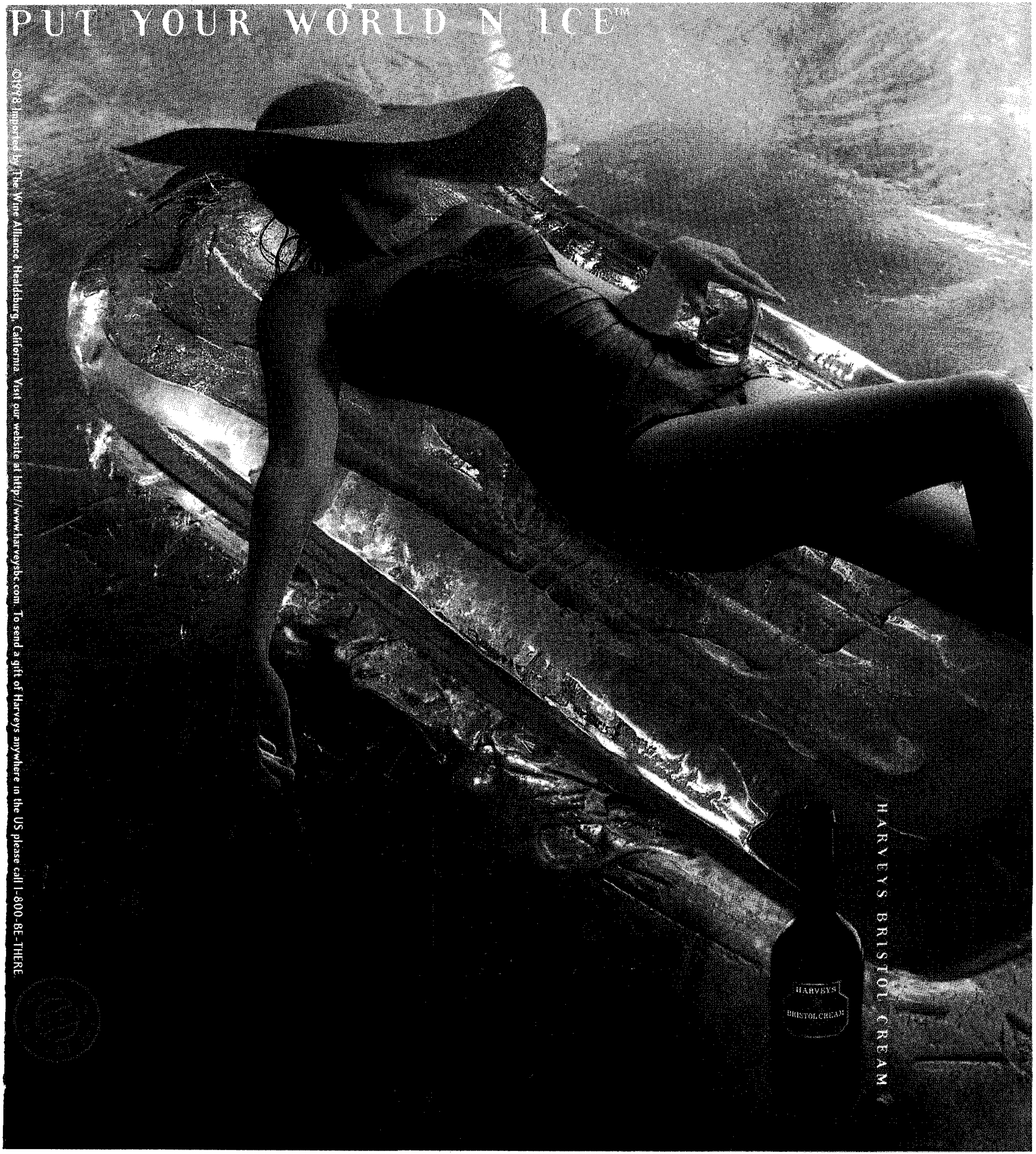
"Do people actually give lectures on 'Huckleberry Finn'?" Mrs. Onassis asked.

"Alas," Kazin said, "I do."

Kazin's self-accounting, in his memoirs and journals, is filled with playful anecdotes, but it also includes painful stuff. When Kazin's father was eighty-two, he was in Coney Island Hospital, suffering from a heart attack, a stroke, "confused in speech, and almost too frightened to speak." He remembers that when he was a boy his father used to introduce him to his friends as "my Kaddish," a strange and dark way of introducing your inheritor. Such was the pressure on the children of immigrants, and so it remains. Writing his journals toward the end of his own life, Kazin clearly could not rid himself of the urge to do more, to write more, to better himself, if only to please the dead:

> When I lie awake at night, afraid that I am walking through the valley of the shadow of death, I feel that I am still the entangled Brooklyn boy who all his life has depended on his will. And there I am in the terrors of the night, still trying to . . . outwit death.
>
> When I pray to You to give me some peace, to cease this endless clamor of anxiety, which consists always in asking, "Oh Lord, what am I supposed to do next?" I am really asking for relief from my overstrained will, from the determination to do and even to do over what is expected of me. That is what secularism is—the triumph of the individual will, no matter what the cost to everything crying out in you for another realm of being.

Kazin's great happiness came in the postwar years, a period of intellectual and sexual liberty for him and his generation of intellectuals, a period of intense pleasure and national possibility. Getting old meant watching the disappearance not merely of one's own youth but of a culture that supported the old life, the reading life. The singular moment of pleasure at the end of "New York Jew" comes when Kazin is locked away with his students, "in this beautiful bedlam and chaos" of New York, poring over the lines of "Sailing to Byzantium": "I feel I am dreaming aloud as I look at the rooftops, at the sky, at the massed white skyline of New York. The view across the rooftops is as charged as the indented black words on the white page. The mass and pressure of the bulging skyline are wild." ♦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AMERICAN SUMMER-1927

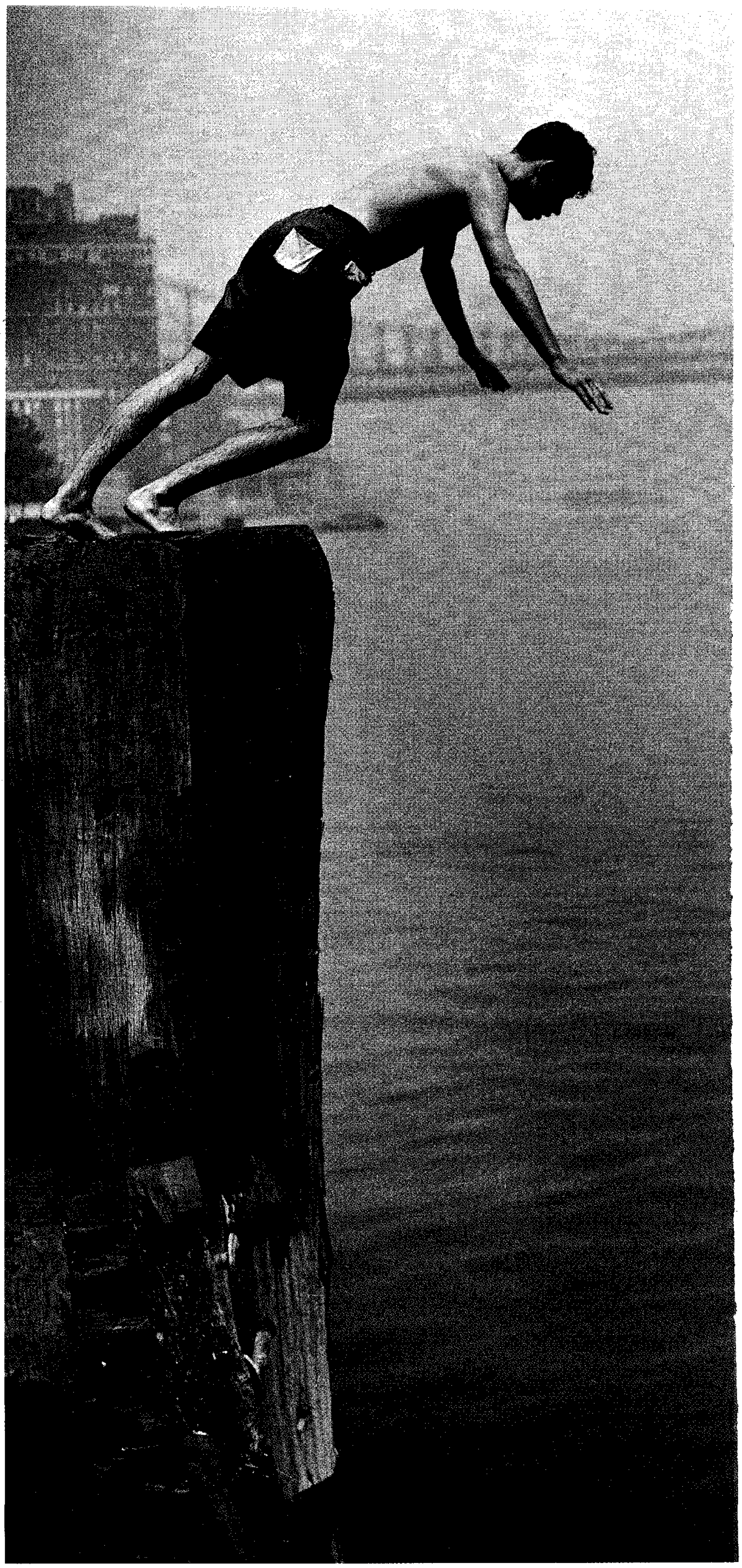
BEFORE AIR-CONDITIONING

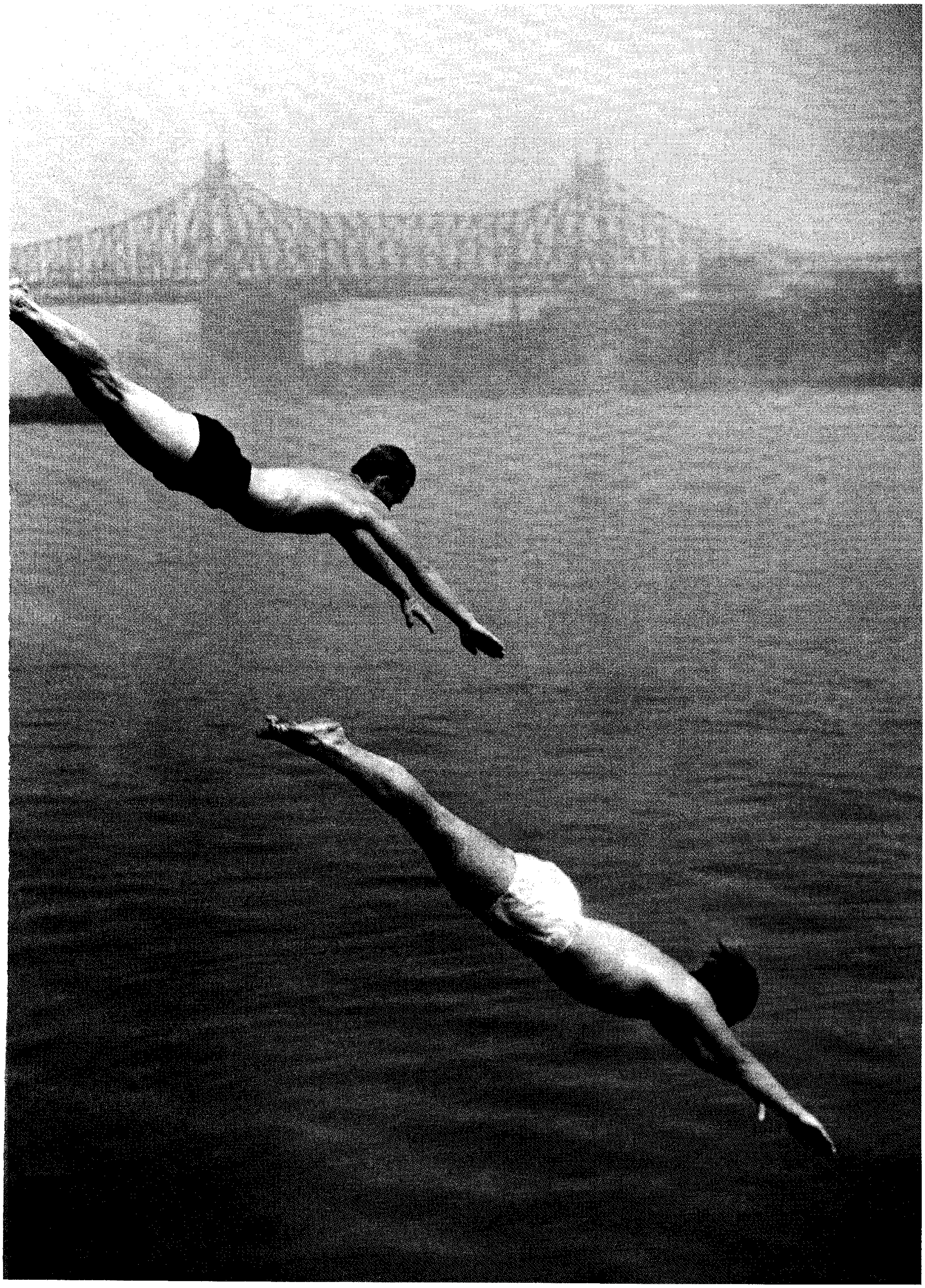
EXACTLY what year it was I can no longer recall—probably 1927 or '28—there was an extraordinarily hot September, which hung on even after school had started and we were back from our Rockaway Beach bungalow. Every window in New York was open, and on the streets venders manning little carts chopped ice and sprinkled colored sugar over mounds of it for a couple of pennies. We kids would jump onto the back steps of the slow-moving, horse-drawn ice wagons and steal a chip or two; the ice smelled vaguely of manure but cooled palm and tongue.

People on West 110th Street, where I lived, were a little too bourgeois to sit out on their fire escapes, but around the corner on 111th and farther uptown mattresses were put out as night fell, and whole families lay on those iron balconies in their underwear.

Even through the nights, the pall of heat never broke. With a couple of other kids, I would go across 110th to the Park and walk among the hundreds of people, singles and families, who slept on the grass, next to their big alarm clocks, which set up a mild cacophony of the seconds passing, one clock's ticks syncopating with another's. Babies cried in the darkness, men's deep voices murmured, and a woman let out an occasional high laugh beside the lake. I can recall only white people spread out on the grass; Harlem began above 116th Street then.

Later on, in the Depression thirties, the summers seemed even hotter. Out West, it was the time of the red sun and the dust storms, when whole desiccated farms blew away and sent the Okies, whom Steinbeck immortalized, out on their desperate treks toward the Pacific. My father had a small coat factory on Thirty-ninth Street then, with about a dozen men working sewing machines. Just to watch them handling thick woollen winter coats in that heat was, for me, a torture. The cutters were on piecework, paid by the number of seams they finished, so their lunch break was short—fifteen or twenty minutes. They brought their own food: bunches of radishes, a tomato perhaps, cucumbers, and a jar of





ARTHUR LEIPZIG

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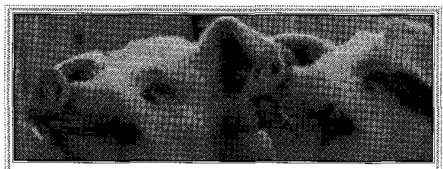

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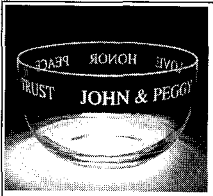

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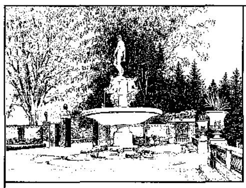
thick sour cream, which went into a bowl they kept under the machines. A small loaf of pumpernickel also materialized, which they tore apart and used as a spoon to scoop up the cream and vegetables.

The men sweated a lot in those lofts, and I remember one worker who had a peculiar way of dripping. He was a tiny fellow, who disdained scissors, and, at the end of a seam, always bit off the thread instead of cutting it, so that inch-long strands stuck to his lower lip, and by the end of the day he had a multicolored beard. His sweat poured onto those thread ends and dripped down onto the cloth, which he was constantly blotting with a rag.

Given the heat, people smelled, of course, but some smelled a lot worse than others. One cutter in my father's shop was a horse in this respect, and my father, who normally had no sense of smell—no one understood why—claimed that he could smell this man and would address him only from a distance. In order to make as much money as possible, this fellow would start work at half past five in the morning and continue until midnight. He owned Bronx apartment houses and land in Florida and Jersey, and seemed half mad with greed. He had a powerful physique, a very straight spine, a tangle of hair, and a black shadow on his cheeks. He snorted like a horse as he pushed the cutting machine, following his patterns through some eighteen layers of winter-coat material. One late afternoon, he blinked his eyes hard against the burning sweat as he held down the material with his left hand and pressed the vertical, razor-sharp reciprocating blade with his right. The blade sliced through his index finger at the second joint. Angrily refusing to go to the hospital, he ran tap water over the stump, wrapped his hand in a towel, and went right on cutting, snorting, and stinking. When the blood began to show through the towel's bunched layers, my father pulled the plug on the machine and ordered him to the hospital. But he was back at work the next morning, and worked right through the day and into the evening, as usual, piling up his apartment houses.

THERE were still elevated trains then, along Second, Third, Sixth, and Ninth Avenues, and many of the cars were wooden, with windows that opened. Broadway had open trolleys with no side walls, in which you at least caught the breeze, hot though it was, so that desperate people, unable to endure their apart-



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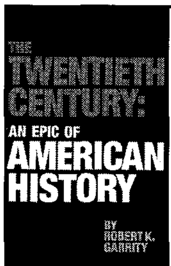

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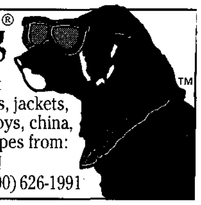

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ments, would simply pay a nickel and ride around aimlessly for a couple of hours to cool off. As for Coney Island on weekends, block after block of beach was so jammed with people that it was barely possible to find a space to sit or to put down your book or your hot dog.

My first direct contact with an air-conditioner came only in the sixties, when I was living in the Chelsea Hotel. The so-called management sent up a machine on casters which rather aimlessly cooled and sometimes heated the air, relying, as it did, on pitchers of water that one had to pour into it. On the initial filling, it would spray water all over the room, so one had to face it toward the bathroom rather than the bed.

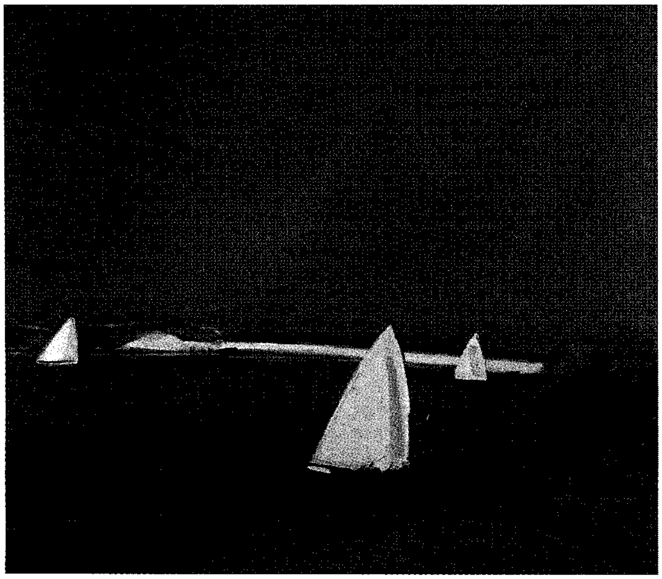
A South African gentleman once told me that New York in August was hotter than any place he knew in Africa, yet people here dressed for a northern city. He had wanted to wear shorts but feared that he would be arrested for indecent exposure.

High heat created irrational solutions: linen suits that collapsed into deep wrinkles when one bent an arm or a knee, and men's straw hats as stiff as matzohs, which, like some kind of hard yellow flower, bloomed annually all over the city on a certain sacred date—June 1st or so. Those hats dug deep pink creases around men's foreheads, and the wrinkled suits, which were supposedly cooler, had to be pulled down and up and sidewise to make room for the body within.

The city in summer floated in a daze that moved otherwise sensible people to repeat endlessly the brainless greeting "Hot enough for ya? Ha-ha!" It was like the final joke before the meltdown of the world in a pool of sweat. —ARTHUR MILLER

AMERICAN SUMMER-1986

FLY-FISHING FOR DOCTORS



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THIS was the summer of 1986, a hot one in Boston, but I never knew that it was summer, exactly, because in the mornings I left before dawn. The walk to my car along the sleeping street was my only time out in the world—a few moments in the dark, when the warm sidewalks were still giving off the evidence of yesterday's heat and walking on them was like passing by the oven in a kitchen. I drove to work along the river, where, by daylight, I knew lovers would come to spread out blankets along the shore, to pilot the little rented sailboats that tacked back and forth beneath the shining bridges, to lie arm in arm under the spreading oaks as lovers do in summertime. My own girlfriend had recently moved into my small apartment, but she was still just two unpacked suitcases and a lump on the other side of the bed. By the time I made it home, every second night, I was too exhausted to talk.

I was a third-year medical student, and in the hospital we were cutting peo-

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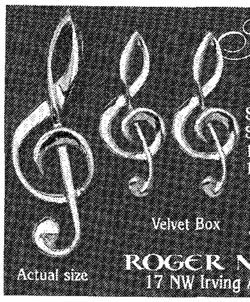

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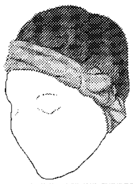

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ple open. This was my rotation in surgery, the first real rotation I had done, and I was terrified and enthralled. I remember leaning in close while the vilest thing I had ever seen—the cracking of a man's chest—was performed by two surgeons, on either side of the table. The sternum was first split with an electric saw; then a steel spreader was inserted and its gears cranked apart until the ribs opened like a bear trap and revealed the shining organs inside, pulsing to a steady beat. That beat was where we were going.

At the time, I thought I wanted to become a surgeon. I was drawn to operating the way I was drawn to the Boston-style boxing matches that occurred nearly every weekend in my neighborhood—big, tight-shirted brawls outside the pubs in Kenmore Square. Surgery seemed, in a way, like a sport: a simple physical pastime that shot me full of adrenaline. And, though it horrified me, I loved it.

But I was also beginning to suspect—correctly, it turned out—that I would not spend my life in a hospital. Every second morning as I drove by the river, I felt the exquisite urge to keep on going, along Route 2 and straight out of Boston, past the suburbs and onward to the sweet country ponds where I had recently been teaching myself to fly-fish. Even then I must have known that this longing would turn out to be stronger than my ambition. The hospital was death. Summer was life.

I was still learning what is called aseptic technique—the ritual cleanliness that surrounds the operating room. This involved washing one's hands and arms with scrub brushes, donning mask and gown and gloves without touching them anywhere on the outside, and then, while assisting in surgeries that could take half a day, never allowing one's hands to move below the waist or above the shoulders. This last part was the most difficult, for the untrained hand reaches every few moments to the face—to brush back hair, to cough—and against these transgressions the scrub nurse stood careful watch, like a guard at a prison. Whenever my hand strayed—as every beginner's did—she instantly raised her finger and barked, in a satisfied voice, "Contamination!" Embarrassed, I would retreat to the scrub room, to rewash, reglove, and regown.

It was hot in the hospital, but the operating rooms were cool, and the coolest of all were the ones where heart surgery took place. These patients had to be kept chilled. Their open chests were packed with ice, and their blood, which was pumped through a bypass machine, was refrigerated before being returned to the arteries. My job was to hold the suction wand that pulled the blood out of the operating field. I was standing there one day, dreaming of water, of standing waist-deep in a sun-drenched pond in the woods, of arcing a frog-green popper across the cloudless New England sky, when I looked up and saw an ant crawl out of the surgeon's mask.

Nature! Summer! I was the only one who had noticed it, because I was the only one whose gaze was not fixed on the open heart in front of us. But then, seconds later, the ant turned around and disappeared. I wasn't quite sure that it hadn't been a hallucination. I kept my eyes on the surgeon's face, but nothing reappeared. Why did I want it to? What instinct for disorder was this?

Oh, how I longed then to be outside—to be at Baddacook Pond while the grasshoppers and dragonflies and honeybees made their crazy thrumming on the shore. It was blasphemous, I thought, to spend an entire summer inside. By evening, all the world would be pouring out onto the banks of the river—the lightning bugs would be blinking, the girls would be walking bare-armed in their summer dresses—and I would be in an operating room, scrubbed and masked.

A moment later, from beneath the surgeon's mask, a set of black feelers appeared again; then, after a pause, the ant itself emerged, not an illusion after all. It stood perched on the narrow brim of the mask, like a goat on a cliff. It paused there, tested the descent with its forelegs, then changed its mind and headed north, out onto the bridge of the surgeon's nose. I watched his head jerk back; I saw his eyes dart away from the beating heart and then cross as they squinted downward. The scrub nurse snatched her hand to her mouth in surprise. (Contamination! Contamination!) In a flash, she reached up and squashed the thing. Seconds later, she had replaced the surgeon's mask, then her own gown and gloves, then his entire gown. A moment after that we were back at work again. Oh, ant! Oh, summer!

—ETHAN CANIN

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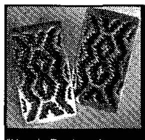

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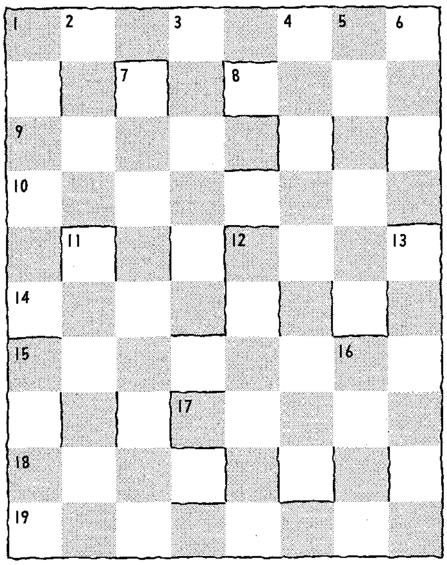
8x10 CRYPTIC

NO. 48 BY DAVID ELLIS DICKERSON



ACROSS

1 Even Judge Ito is consumed by evil (8)
8 Award not returned before the Fourth of July (4)
9 Sap finally cleaned shower (5)
10 Called breaking-and-entering act "crazy" (8)
12 Automaker's cry overheard (4)
14 Royal family member's article for the *Voice* (4)
15 Swift, for one, posed with flower shirt (8)
17 Farm division lacks leadership (5)
18 A problem for teens: crack injected with nitrogen (4)
19 Grand Beach is behind you (8)

DOWN

1 Enlightened one's pal had reformed (6)
2 Measure marathoner after the event, say? (4)
3 In Scandinavia, Teutons fly a plane (6)
4 "Shape" describes a hoedown partner in dance formation (5, 4)
5 Finish corn and make love? (6)
6 Eddy newly made batik (4)
7 Professor's aide ran into alternative director (9)
11 Take up weird chants (6)
12 Gives up on fights (6)
13 Club he'd washed (6)
15 Showed deep disgust for gaiter (4)
16 Study sulfur and tin (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 47 appears on page 62. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

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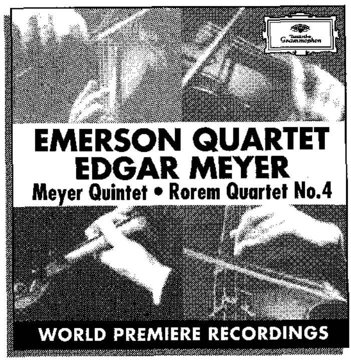

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FIRST NOVELS

HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD, by Kiran Desai (Atlantic Monthly; $22). When Sampath Chawla, a dreamy, ineffectual twenty-year-old, flees his family and climbs into an ancient guava tree in search of freedom and the "luxury of stillness," he inadvertently becomes a celebrity in his village in India. A former postal worker with a habit of opening undelivered mail, Sampath soon awes the gathering crowds with his intimate knowledge of their secrets. High jinks ensue as his family—including a pompous father, a fiery sister, and an eccentric mother devoted to cooking—becomes caught up in the commotion over the fate of the newfound guru. Desai is a lavish, sharp-eyed fabulist whose send-up of small-town culture cuts to the heart of human perversity.

THE LONG FALLING, by Keith Ridgway (Houghton Mifflin; $22). After Grace Quinn, a stoical Irish housewife, kills her abusive husband, running him down with the car on a "still, cold night," she goes to Dublin to stay with her son, Martin, who left home after confessing to his father that he was gay. Finding herself pursued by a sympathetic policeman and a grasping journalist, she escapes into the consoling anonymity of the city. The author affectingly renders the separate sanctuaries of mother and son—"deep inside, from where no voice reported"—and lights the distance between them.

A SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE, by Ronald Wright (Picador; $23). In this elegant novel, Wright has great fun taking the conventions of Victorian science fiction out for a spin. His narrator, a present-day archeologist, stumbles upon H. G. Wells's time machine, makes a few adjustments, and lands in the middle of post-apocalyptic London; there, in accordance with genre expectations, he explores the future, unravels the past, and reaches some rather pointed conclusions about twentieth-century society. This is well-trampled ground, but Wright's narrative is gripping and lyrical: you struggle to slow down but find yourself rushing forward.

PERSIAN BRIDES, by Dorit Rabinyan, translated from the Hebrew by Yael Lotan (Braziller; $22.50). Rabinyan is a young Israeli poet and journalist, and her first novel, a ripely imagined tale of Jewish life in Iran at the (previous) turn of the century, is a feat of sorcery. The characters, comic, sodden, and sly, spill out of this small book like clowns in a ragtag circus, but the author's gift is such that each one, even the stalwart Nazie, the story's Cinderella—plucking chickens and pitting dates—maintains a passionate, steely dignity.

LLOYD: WHAT HAPPENED, by Stanley Bing (Crown; $25.95). This novel, nominally about a merger foiled by a middle-management coup, is richly layered with executive-level smartassery: power insults, expense-account abuse, workplace sex, and reflexive sarcasm. Bing's satire has all the comic anomie and product placement of other great Metro-North novels, but his insider knowledge of cutthroat office maneuvering lends the hero's off-hour domesticity, by contrast, a surprisingly unironic sweetness.

THE SERVICE OF CLOUDS, by Delia Falconer (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $23). In 1907, Harry Kitchings arrives in Katoomba Falls, Australia, equipped with a panoramic camera and self-appointed to "take photographs of God," or, failing that, of the clouds that halo the landscape's Blue Mountains. Shrouded in myth because of his sporadic retreats and his lonesome wanderings, the solitary photographer arouses the interest of the locals and, unwittingly, the adoration of Eureka, a young pharmacist's assistant. Eureka's poetic, dreamlike narrative recalls at once the hurtful longing for a man who keeps himself at bay and the natural world that, through his camera lens, he allows her to embrace.

A BOHEMIAN YOUTH, by Josef Hiršal, translated from the Czech by Michael Henry Heim (Northwestern; $14.95). This novel about a peasant family in the First Czechoslovak Republic is that rare postmodern experiment which actually remembers to tell a story. The body of the text is only seven pages long—it is preceded by "A Word to the Wise" and followed by "Notes" to the text, "Notes to the Notes," and a "Note to the Notes to the Notes"—but Hiršal's wistful tale holds its own among these literary games, and his slim volume, despite its debts to great French and Czech innovators like Perec and Hrabal, remains a splendidly original achievement.

HOMESTEAD, by Rosina Lippi (Delphinium/HarperCollins; $21). By the time you finish the first of these linked stories, you can hardly bear to have it end. Luckily, its characters, who all live in a tiny village in the Austrian Alps, reappear during a sixty-eight-year period that spans both World Wars: in the nineteen-seventies, the villagers still take their cows to upland meadows for the summer, know everybody else's business, and marry for life. It is this sense of a bucolic, secure world apart that makes every variation—a postcard from a stranger, the appearance of a foreign deserter, even a bus ride—momentous.

THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for seven combined issues: Feb. 23 & Mar. 2, Apr. 27 & May 4, June 22 & 29, Aug. 24 & 31, Oct. 19 & 26, Dec. 14 & 21, Dec. 28 & Jan. 4) by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXXIV, No. 17, June 22 & 29, 1998. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No.190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $39.95; two years, $72.00. In Canada, one year, $83.00 (includes GST and HST where applicable). In Germany, one year, DM290. Mail orders to: IP Internationale Presse, Distribution & Marketing GmbH, Waldstr. 70, D-63128 Dietzenbach, Germany. Other foreign subscriptions, one year, $91.00, payable in advance.

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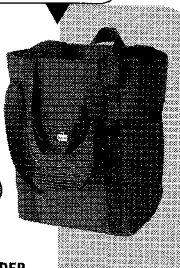

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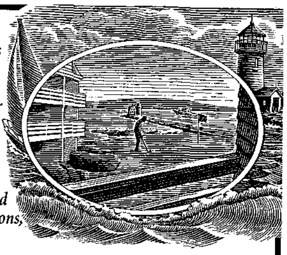

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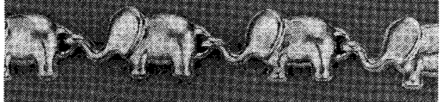

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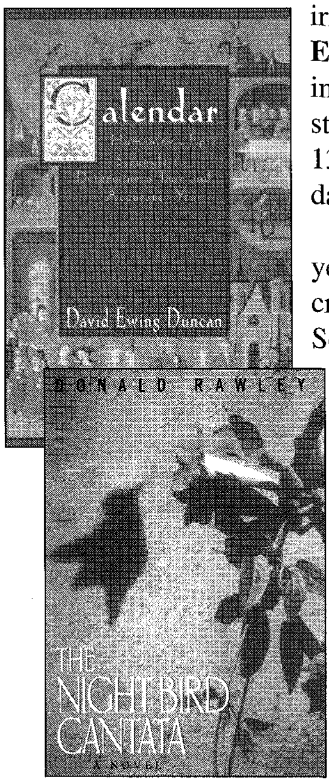
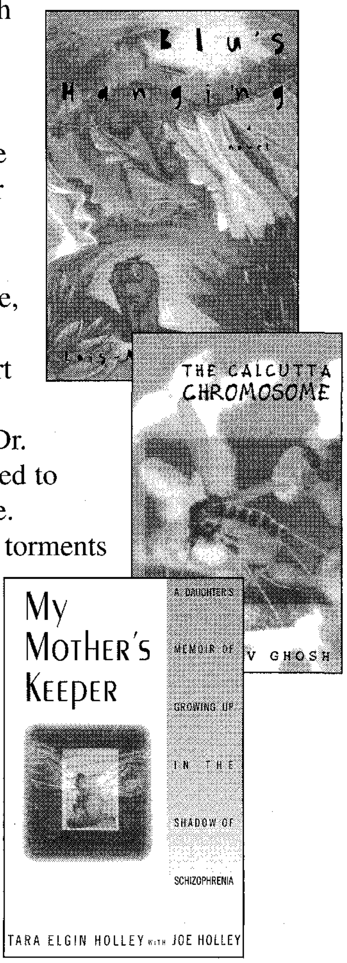
A quintet of contemporary bards sings lyrically this month of sexual identity, filial responsibility, the nature of humanity, and even our perception of place and time.



As a result of the changeover from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1582, ten days were irreplaceably "lost." This remarkable paradox serves as the climax to **David Ewing Duncan**'s ***CALENDAR***, a fascinating true chronicle of the historical initiative to set time right. Duncan recounts one of the great hitherto untold stories of civilization as he carries readers along on a journey that spans 13,000 years—from humankind's first crude attempts to record the passing of days to the problematic development of the modern atomic clock.

THE NIGHT BIRD CANTATA is the fictional memoir of a troubled ten-year-old boy abandoned without warning by his self-involved mother and cruel, dictatorial grandmother to the care of his grandmother's maid in black South Phoenix. This debut novel by **Donald Rawley** explores a singular summer of confusion, fever dreams, betrayals and rude sexual awakenings as it celebrates a very special friendship born of shared pain and loss.

Hawaii is the setting for **Lois-Ann Yamanaka**'s novel ***BLU'S HANGING***, but it is not the idealized tropical paradise most of us have come to expect. Rich in color and peppered with island pidgin, Yamanaka's tale deftly balances poignancy and humor as it tells the story of a family chained by poverty and diminished by tragedy through the endearing voice of Ivah, the teenage "big sista," who struggles to protect her two vulnerable younger siblings from the malicious cruelties of life.


Blu's Hanging
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Amitav Ghosh's novel ***THE CALCUTTA CHROMOSOME*** is a unique, multi-layered work; part medical suspense, part speculative fiction, part allegorical fable, part historical adventure, part international thriller, and part ghost story, all wrapped around a provocative philosophical core. In it, the author imagines a massive worldwide conspiracy born in the laboratory of Dr. Ronald Ross—the British scientist who discovered how malaria is transmitted to humans—that spreads, lethal and undetected, into our present and our future.

In ***MY MOTHER'S KEEPER***, **Tara Elgin Holley** recalls the trials and torments she experienced growing up as the child of a schizophrenic. Written with the aid of her husband, Joe Holley, Tara bravely and eloquently explores a powerful mother-daughter bond. In doing so, she recounts the painful, yet ultimately inspiring, story of her love for—and responsibility to—the sadly damaged woman who gave her birth.

We'll talk again.

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

NOTES ON CAMP

BY MARK LEYNER

COME July, as the thousands of little gulags that dot the turbid, leech-infested fens of the Berkshires and Adirondacks echo with the cracking voices of hapless pubescents being warehoused for the summer, moms and dads can cavort uninhibitedly in any room in the house, with Stan Getz burbling from the hi-fi while they replenish their Martinis from a huge underground storage tank in the back yard. At least that's the scenario I imagined at age eight, as I languished at camp, weaving lanyards and singing Bavarian roundelays while fending off the taunts of the kiddie Cossacks I bunked with. I could never understand why my parents, who touted me as their beautiful genius prince, could so easily pack me off to fend for myself among God knows what assortment of bed-wetters and animal torturers.

I won't reveal the actual name of the camp I was sent to. Suffice it to say that it had one of those ersatz American Indian names synthesized from the first names of the owner's children (e.g., Natalie, Gabriel, and Kenneth yield Camp Na-Ga-Ken-Ken). It was situated in the Adirondack Mountains, across from a fat girls' camp and next door to Word of Life, an evangelical camp whose carillon hymns, broadcast incessantly over a staticky P.A. system, competed with the whine of outboard motors and chain saws for sonic supremacy over idyllic Schroon Lake.

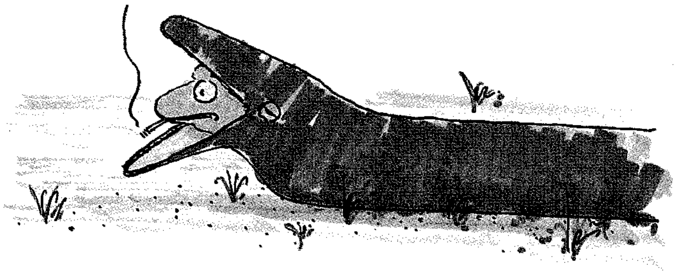
It was there that I discovered a preternatural aptitude for archery, a talent that had previously gone unrecognized by my guidance counsellors at P.S. 32 in Jersey City. Since I was small, delicately featured, insular, supercilious, prone to outbursts of violence (I slept with my bow and a full quiver), and given to quoting Gérard de Nerval, I had to fight for self-respect at Na-Ga-Ken-Ken every day, and was most certainly not the proverbial "happy camper." I became friends with only two people that summer: a retarded dishwasher and a pockmarked, bucktoothed Alabamian counsellor who promised, insinuatingly, to take me to see "Yellow Submarine" someday, "just the two of us."

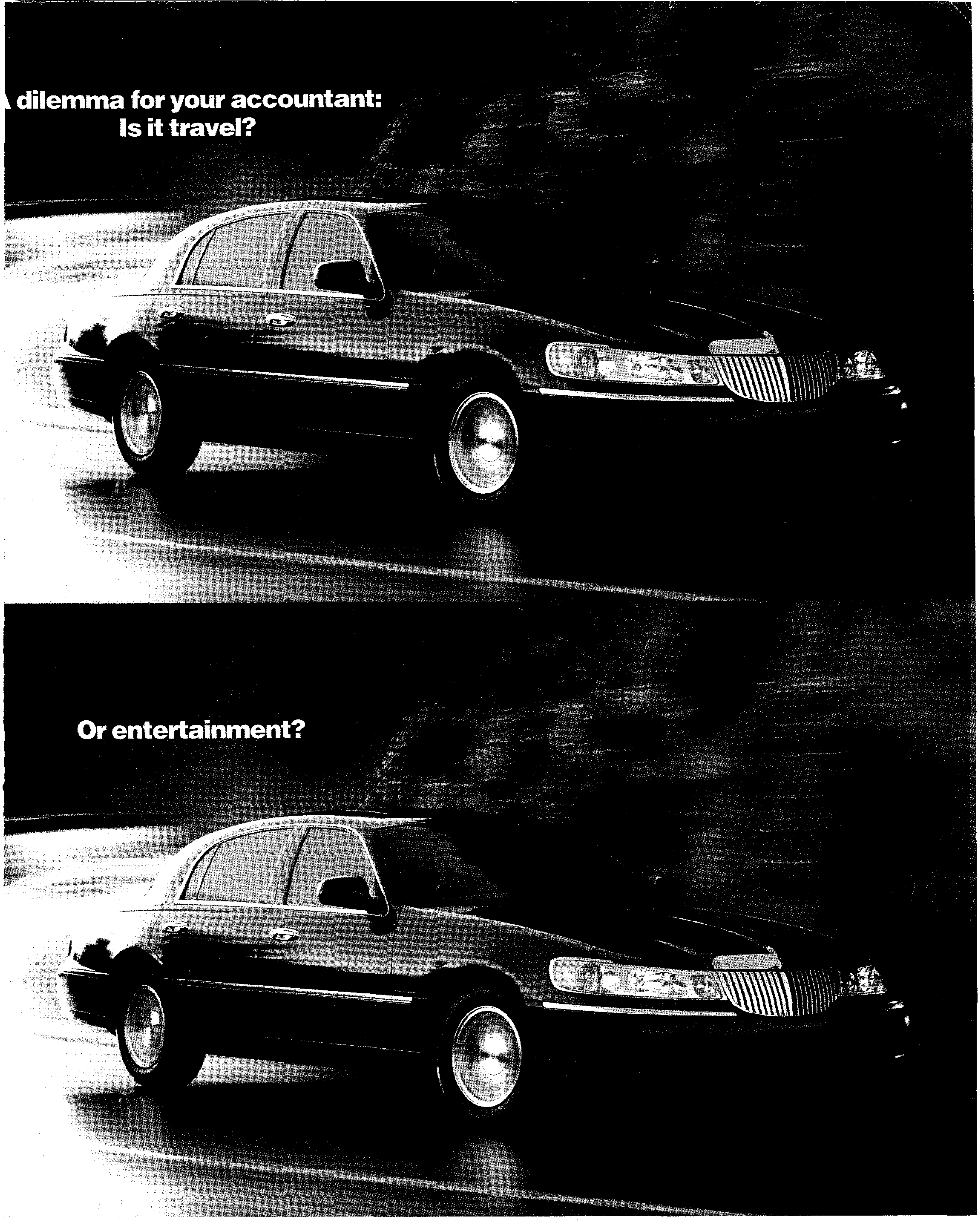
And then there was Bruce, a classic summer-camp archetype: older (he was nine), cigarette-smoking, beer-drinking, jaded, and a fount of forbidden wisdom. That summer, for instance, he had jock itch (*tinea cruris*). To the rest of us, that seemed wildly exotic—as if he'd contracted some drug-resistant strain of venereal disease while banging hookers in Borneo. One day, Bruce held court at the horseshoe pit, regaling us with explicit details of the love act—for many of us, our first introduction to the facts of life. I couldn't believe that my parents would do such a thing, and I remonstrated fiercely with Bruce. "What do you think they're doing right now?" he sneered. Horrified, I ran to a counsellor and insisted on an immediate phone call home. My mother answered, the dulcet inflections of Astrud Gilberto in the background. "What are you and Dad doing?" I demanded indignantly. "Making fondue," she replied. (To this day, "making fondue" remains one of my favorite euphemisms for intercourse.)

Although my letters home read like desperate missives from captives in some Hezbollah oubliette in the Bekaa Valley, I was never quite as melodramatic as my bunkmate Gushy Grubenfleisch. Gushy hid himself in the trunk of his dad's Cadillac DeVille at the end of Parents' Weekend, and it wasn't until they stopped for gas almost three hours later, somewhere along the New York Thruway, that the dehydrated stowaway was discovered, and then hauled all the way back to Na-Ga-Ken-Ken. The deep parallel furrows dug by Gushy's heels as he was dragged from the parking lot to our bunk served, for the remainder of that summer, as a chilling reminder of what happens to those who try to escape.

It's no wonder that summer camp has provided such fertile territory for horror films. Imagine the following scene: Late August, twilight. Bruce and I run into each other down at the lake by the animal cages. Bruce's pet, a large, banded water snake (*Nerodia sipedon*), has somehow "escaped" from its cage and slithered into the cage of my frog (a demure *Rana pipiens* named Ringo). We've interrupted them mid-meal. The only part of Ringo still visible is his head, which protrudes from the snake's gaping hinged jaws. He's blinking, with a kind of tragic equanimity, as if to say, "Hey, shit happens. What are you gonna do?" As the bitter strains of mess call waft over from the fat girls' camp, Bruce cracks a joke about troughs of wilted crudités, and then conjures up the unforgettable image of ravenous chubby girls who'd do anything—*anything*, winks the nine-year-old roué—for a Milky Way.

"Where are our sweethearts?/They are in the grave:/They are more fortunate/In a better place!" I intone, quoting Nerval's "Les Cydalises." Bruce scratches his crotch, shoots me a look of grudging respect, and then punches me hard in the ear. ♦

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